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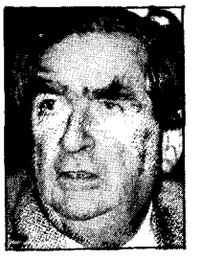

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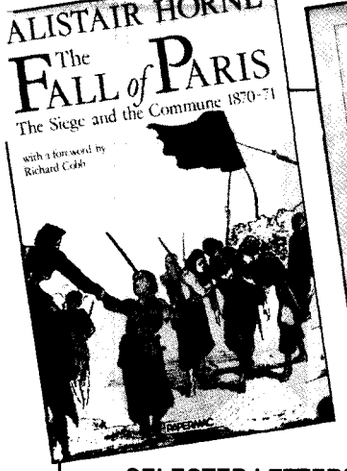


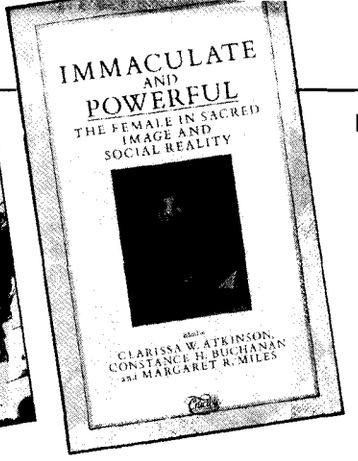
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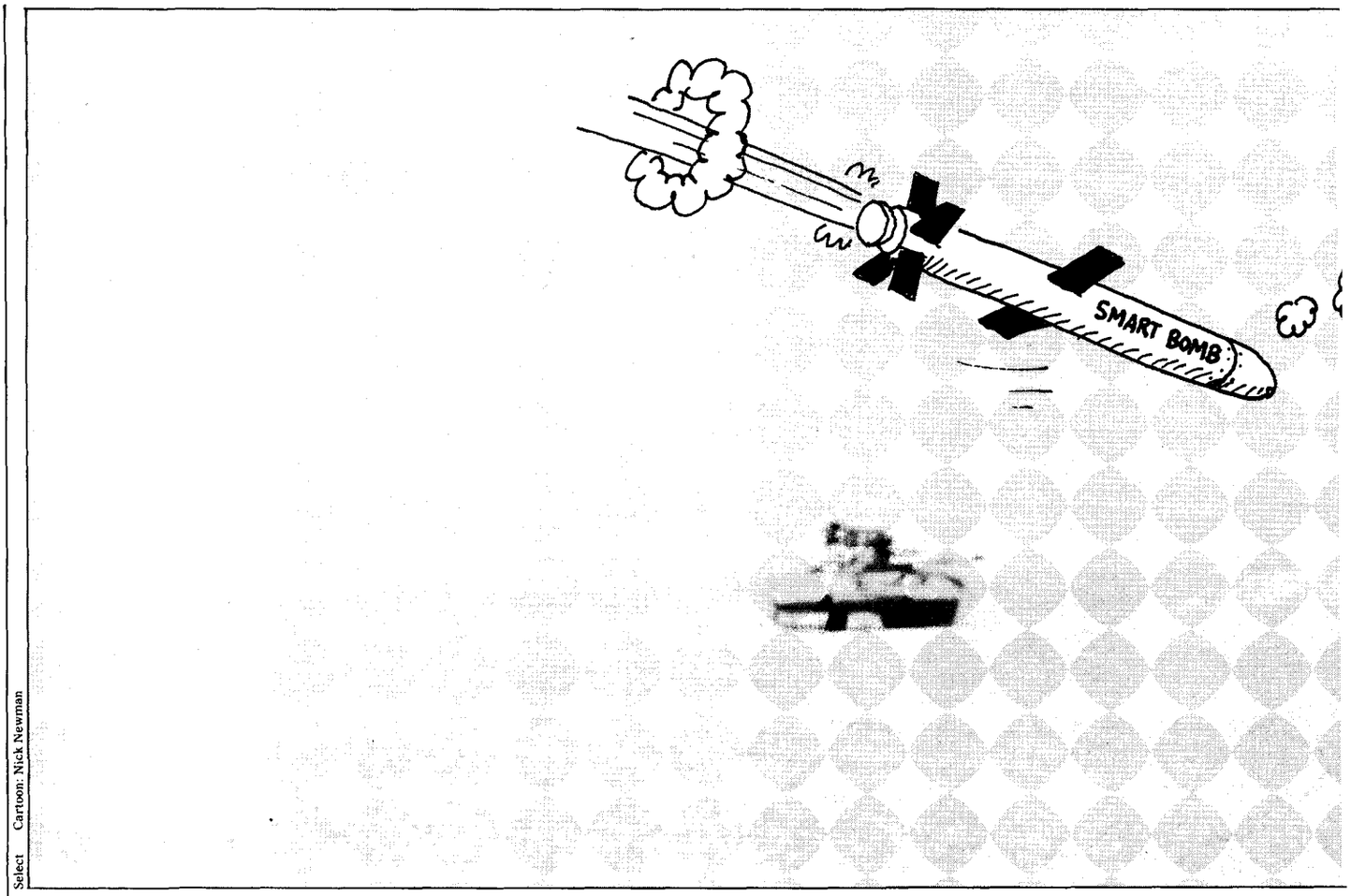
# LEADER

**Eric Hobsbawm** on irresponsibility in the Gulf

# Follies Of War

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Saddam and George Bush have both told us that God is for them. Heaven has not issued any press releases, unless the Pope (who is against the Gulf war) knows something we don't, but if it does, God will certainly disclaim responsibility for the most irresponsible war of the century. Irresponsible, but not pointless. It would have been better to avoid a war, but it was right to resist an indefensible aggression by a regime in whose favour nothing can be said. Saddam will lose the war and deserve to. If he has become a hero to the Muslim masses outside, and probably to a lot of Third World non-Muslims, it is not on his merits, but because the United States, with gratuitous and superfluous aid from Britain, has cast him for the part.

This is an early consequence of the crazy manner in which the United States conducts its (and our) affairs. For the present situation is due not only to the Magoo-like myopia of Washington and its incompetence in the affairs of any part of the globe not actually State-side, startling though these are. After all, days before the invasion surprised President Bush, his ambassador, presumably not speaking just for herself, told Saddam in so many words that Washington gave him the green light on Kuwait. The last time Iraq threatened Kuwait, in 1966, the Brits flew 6,000 troops into the principality where they sweated quietly for a few summer weeks until, the point having been taken, no more was heard about Iraq's 19th province.

But the basic trouble in the Gulf is that the United States is exclusively geared to fight a major world-scale war, and its forces can't fight any other, not even against enemies the size of Grenada and Panama. There are three reasons for this. Wealth and technological superiority are by far its greatest military assets, dying is not popular among either American soldiers or civilians, and until Gorbachev came along, a world war against the Soviets was the only one for which the Pentagon prepared. But this is precisely the kind of war least suited to either deterring or repelling regional aggressions. Of course during the cold war both Saddam and Bush would have been deterred by the prospect that a Gulf conflict would escalate into global nuclear war. To this extent the 'deterrence theory' has ceased to work.

So a world-war type of war is now underway in the Gulf and has apparently already overpowered the clear and limited UN objectives. Its technological arsenal slowly lumbered into place in the desert, while Saddam had five months to prepare his defences. Its strategy is designed to minimise allied deaths at all costs. The logical result is that in a month of war more high explosive has been dropped on Iraq than was used in the whole of world war two. Pretty well the entire post-biblical civilian infrastructure of the unhappy country has been smashed, and we hear rather less about the miracles of computer-game warfare and surgically exact bombs winning wars without killing people. The war on the ground, without which Kuwait cannot be freed, is still weeks away. Meanwhile, Saddam can claim that he alone has resisted the greatest military power in the world plus allies for longer than any Arab states ever resisted Israel, or anybody. The United States has succeeded in turning a politically-isolated, murderous tyrant into a heroic myth before the liberation of Kuwait has even begun, while waging total war against the



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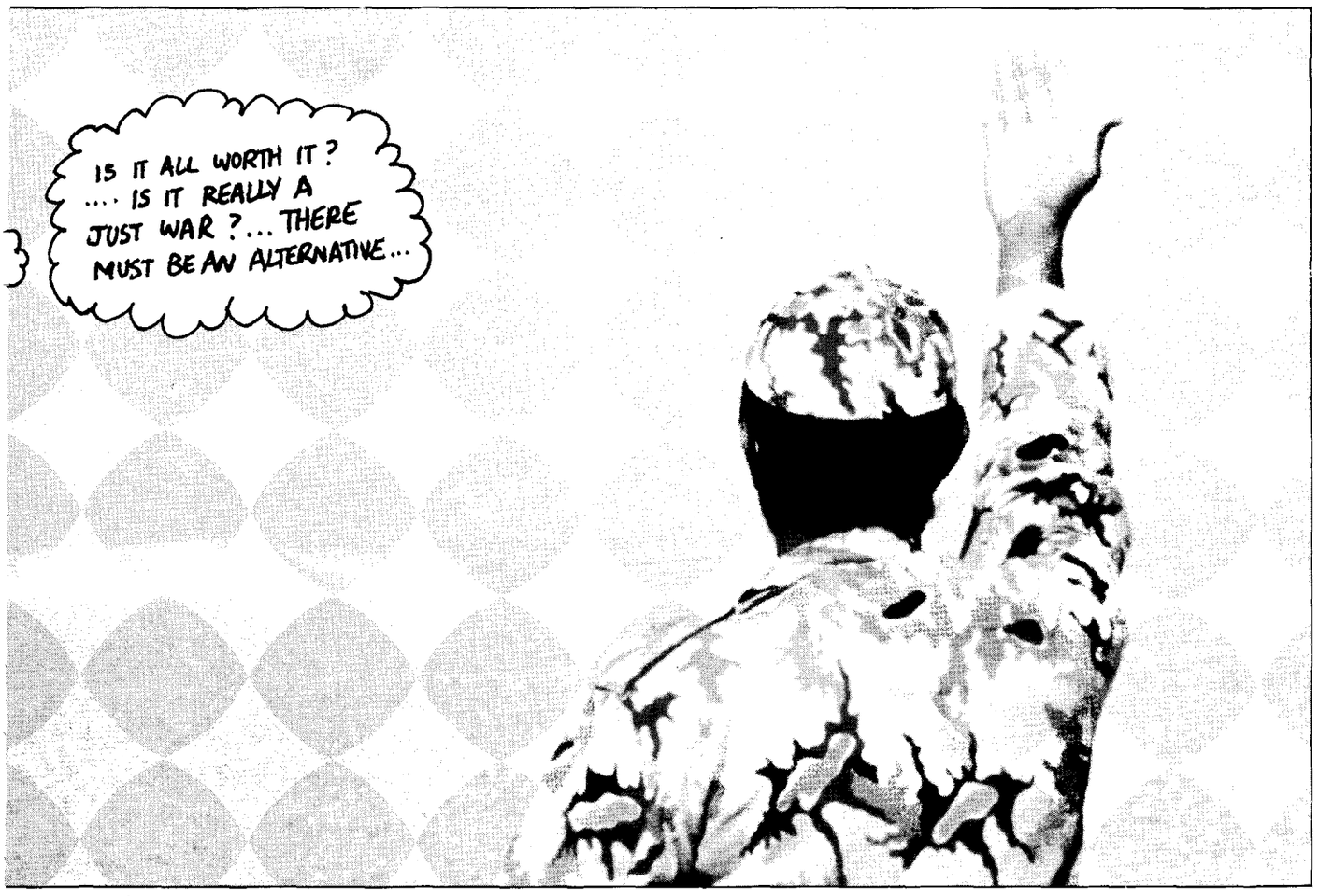


civilian society of Iraq, whose citizens are no more responsible for the war than you or me. No doubt we shall be told that this was exactly what General Schwarzkopf planned.

The noises we hear about the need to extend the war aims are mainly excuses for not knowing quite how to get Saddam out of Kuwait without exposing allied soldiers to Iraqi machine guns. They have no bearing on postwar peace and stability in the area or stopping some other middle-sized gangster swallowing a weaker neighbour. For, like the Falklands war (only on a bigger scale), this can only be a one-off operation. Never again will the United States find itself, at the outset of an entirely unexpected war, with enough hardware to fight the only kind of war it knows how to. Ten years of Reagan armament which allowed it to, also bankrupted it; without the USSR as enemy, not even the United States will permanently keep up this level, and if they wanted to, they could no longer afford it. The 'new world order', whatever it is, will require a less clumsy and more cost-effective defence.

Not that this war will bring a 'new world order' even in the Middle East. How could it? The place will still be flooded with more arms than any other part of the globe, even if Iraq has none. The war will leave all the multiple tensions of the region just where they were before, or worse. The Middle East, adjoining the Muslim parts of the USSR, will remain as before the chief danger to world peace.

The war cannot even realise Washington's ambition to be recognised as the world's only superpower and global policeman. (This, rather than oil, is the real subtext of the conflict.) No state is strong enough to play this role solo. The United States is now too poor for it, and has the wrong kind of armed forces for the job of global hired security guard. And there is no sign that the Japanese and the Germans (not to mention the Russians) want one.

Was it necessary? In theory not, in practice probably yes, given folly and stubbornness on both sides; though this does not excuse either. Will it achieve any purposes that justify its cost in countries destroyed, the dead and the maimed, misery for some millions of Third World migrant workers now without jobs and bankruptcy for their countries, plus the erosion of the standards of humanity in Britain and the United States? No. But we are stuck with it until it is won in a manner suitable to Bush, whether or not the UN conditions have been met. So are the other countries which support it, even if they have been less keen to play soldiers.

All we and they can do is to resist the degeneration of a justified action of international collective security into a United States' imperial ego-trip, to stop the affair getting further out of hand, and in doing so to prevent the UN, the *only* available base for a world order, from falling into lasting discredit. We can remind ourselves that, whatever the hype, Saddam is no greater a world danger than Galtieri's Argentina was, and that the freedom and democracy at stake in this war is not ours but the Third World's. And that every man, woman and child who is killed during this conflict, by bomb, epidemic and starvation, is just as much a casualty of war as a marine or a pilot. And there will be plenty. ●

E.J. Hobsbawm



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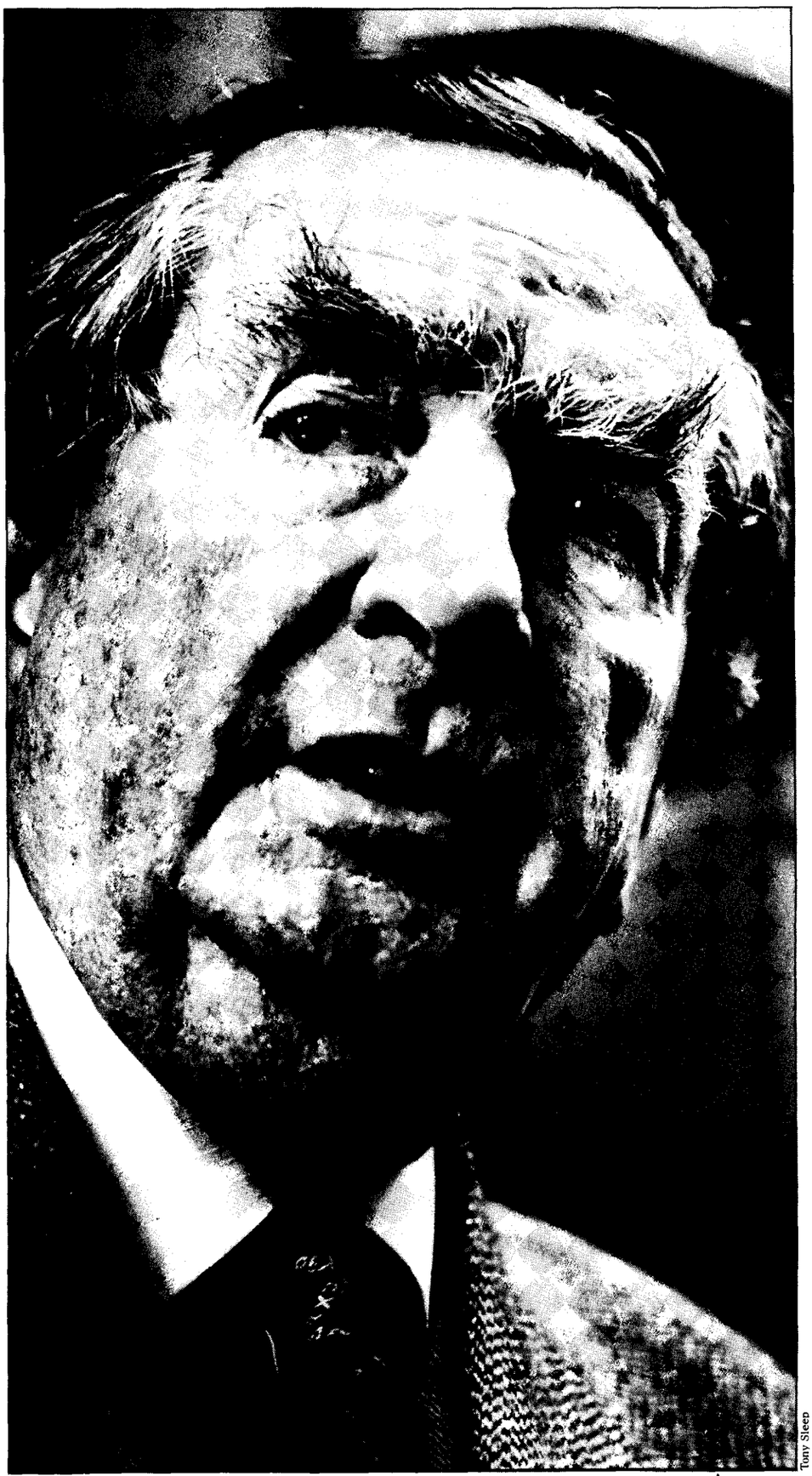
**Jon Snow** talks to Denis Healey about the Gulf war

# Voice of Reason

**Denis Healey is a Labour MP and a former defence secretary and chancellor of the exchequer**



Tony Sleep

**Denis, great Atlanticist, a man with a vivid war experience, former defence secretary, it's an unlikely position to find you in over this war, isn't it?**
I don't think so. Anybody who's actually been in a war is very reluctant to see other people stumbling into an unnecessary one. That's one thing Ted Heath and I have in common.

**Some would argue that the US has had its way. The fact that there isn't a common European voice, and the old Atlantic Alliance has stood true between Britain and the US, has meant that war was inevitable.**
There is a lot of truth in that. The most depressing element in the whole situation is that Bush changed his objectives every week or two, and the British government followed every twist and turn in American policy, right up to the present. We don't seem to have any influence on American policy, and yet without us I think American policy would not appear credible in Europe.

**But if we look at what we now know to be the case – which is that Saddam Hussein has an enormous war machine, that he was a tremendous threat in the region – how, without going to war, and through the mere sustaining of sanctions, do you reduce that threat?**
My own belief, which is shared, oddly enough, by the head of the CIA, William Webster, is that sanctions would have eroded his military capacity so much that, given another nine months or so – assuming we had used that period for more flexible diplomacy, which we notably failed to do – then we could either have got him out by negotiation, or we could have promoted a situation inside Iraq in which he couldn't fight. There is no question that fighting a war to eject him from Kuwait is going to make all the problems of the Middle East more difficult to solve.

**But those who advocate war as the solution are pointing to the fact that even after three or four weeks of war, only 20% of his military machine had been destroyed...**
This is quite an argument against thinking that you can dispose of Saddam Hussein by bombing his country back into the stone age, isn't it?

**But your difficulty, surely, is that even if sanctions had worked for a year or even two years, you would still be left with that formidable monster of a regime...**



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90% of his currency comes from the export of oil, and that's been completely shut off. He isn't able to buy spares for his tanks or his aircraft. There is a big question mark over whether he's got sufficient chemicals to produce enough kerosene to go on fighting the war. We'd have been much better off corralling him, punishing him, because after all, far from gaining economically he's lost very, very heavily. He's lost almost all his hard currency. Keeping him in quarantine is much wiser than producing a situation in which you might put Iran back in control of the Gulf, after eight years in which the whole of the outside world, including the Soviet Union and the US, built up this great military monster in Iraq, in order to prevent Iran from running the Gulf. And we've got a further problem if Iraq is effectively destroyed as a functioning state. The risk is that the Turks, who've begun to develop a very active policy, will try to grab the northern part of Iraq. They'll come to blows with the Kurds, who'll want their own state, and see this as a chance for getting it; the Iranians will no doubt try to grab the Shia part of Iraq in the south; and the Syrians will want their bit as well. Everything will be infinitely worse.

**Your scenario before the war then was: sanctions, leading to a position where sooner or later you could negotiate the issues involved. Presumably you also believed that it might be possible to negotiate some form of multilateral disarmament in the region?**
We're going to have to try to do that anyway. One of the problems with fighting the war is that the Americans and the British have been offering more and more arms to the Saudis and the Gulf states. The Israelis have exploited their position, getting promises of more arms, both from the US, and recently from Germany. So the arms race is racing merrily ahead, and most of the regimes to which we are giving arms are just as uncertain in their ultimate allegiance as Iran under the Shah, or indeed Iraq under Saddam Hussein.

**What do you think the war has done to the possibility of a kind of a global settlement in the Middle East, particularly as far as the Israelis are concerned?**
It has made everything much more difficult. According to the Israelis, when Shamir saw Bush in Washington he was able to get, as the price for no pre-emptive attack on Iraq, a promise that the US would not actually support a conference on the Middle East when the war was over. And, of course, a lot of people now think that the US is actively going to oppose such a conference. In recent days there's been increasing evidence that the European countries, including Britain, are extremely disturbed about this.

**Do you think Mubarak, and some of what are described as the moderate leaders in the region, will survive the war long-term?**
It is very difficult to say. The moment the fighting is over, the internal strains will become more pressing. There is no doubt that the presence of half a million white faces including women, Jews and black men in the American army in Saudi Arabia, is imposing great strains on the present regime. Don't forget that it is only five years since King Fahd issued a fatwah to the effect that the earth was flat, and that anybody that said it was round was insulting the Muslim religion. But one thing I've learnt through life is don't predict when a revolution will take place, or who will run it. When I was Defence Secretary and, to my shame, trying to sell tanks to King Idris in Libya, I was pretty sure that he'd be overthrown in an army coup, and I tried to identify the colonel who was likely to be the leader of the coup. I decided that it would be a Colonel Shelhi, a very intelligent man and a great admirer of Colonel Nasser. After the coup I heard from my ambassador there that Shelhi had been woken by his batman on the morning of the coup with the words, 'Excuse me sir, the coup has begun.' And Shelhi turned over and said, 'Don't be silly, it's tomorrow.'

**You can now afford in the late summer of your political life...**
Late spring...

**...you can afford to take this high moral ground...**
It is not high moral ground, it is hard-headed political ground. I haven't argued morality, I've tried to argue what is likely to happen to the Middle East as a result of the war.

**Let's plunge you back into your office in the Ministry of Defence. As secretary of state for defence you could never have afforded a position like this.**
I wouldn't have supported it. It was I who decided to remove our troops from the Gulf, because I thought they'd become more of an irritant than a stabilising factor.

**This now brings you to the extraordinary position, 20 years on, in which you are essentially at the same table as your old adversary Edward Heath...**
Well, he was my old comrade-in-arms in the good old days of the prewar popular front. He and I fought shoulder to shoulder against appeasement, and against Lord Hailsham. However, in some respects Heath goes further than I do. Heath, I think, wrongly believed that it was possible as early as last autumn to negotiate the peaceful withdrawal of Saddam Hussein from the Gulf. I don't think that was true then, though it could have become so as Saddam Hussein faced continued sanctions. But now, of course, Saddam has got into another mode. He has said many times that he doesn't believe American public opinion will withstand the return of a lot of body bags. And there is no doubt that the visit of Cheney and Powell to the Gulf convinced them that to fight a land war at this time would risk over-straining the support among the American people. This seems to be the view that President Bush has accepted. But it is far from clear, given the surprisingly small effect of this continuous bombardment on Iraq's military potential, that even another month will seriously reduce it.

Then you run into the appalling problem that the Americans were conscious of from the word go, and that is Ramadan in the middle of March, and whether the Muslims will fight. Assuming they do, then the following month the sandstorms begin, when it is very difficult to fight, especially in chemical warfare kit. And then you run into the haj, the pilgrimage, when millions of Muslim pilgrims from all over the world, including Iraq, Iran and Jordan, will flood into southern Arabia. And if King Fahd refuses to have them there, then he can no longer present himself as the guardian, on behalf of the Muslim world, of the holy places.

**Do you think the Labour Party had any alternative but to travel the course it has taken?**
The Labour Party course has been deliberately misrepresented both by the government and by much of the press. When they spoke in the debate just before the war, Neil Kinnock and Gerald Kaufman said that a vote for the adjournment would not be a vote for war, that we believed that sanctions should be given longer. I listened to the BBC headlines the next morning, and they said, 'Yesterday parliament gave overwhelming support to the government's handling of the Gulf crisis.' I believe that the opposition should have insisted on having a vote on a motion in which the government could have asked for support, and we would have put



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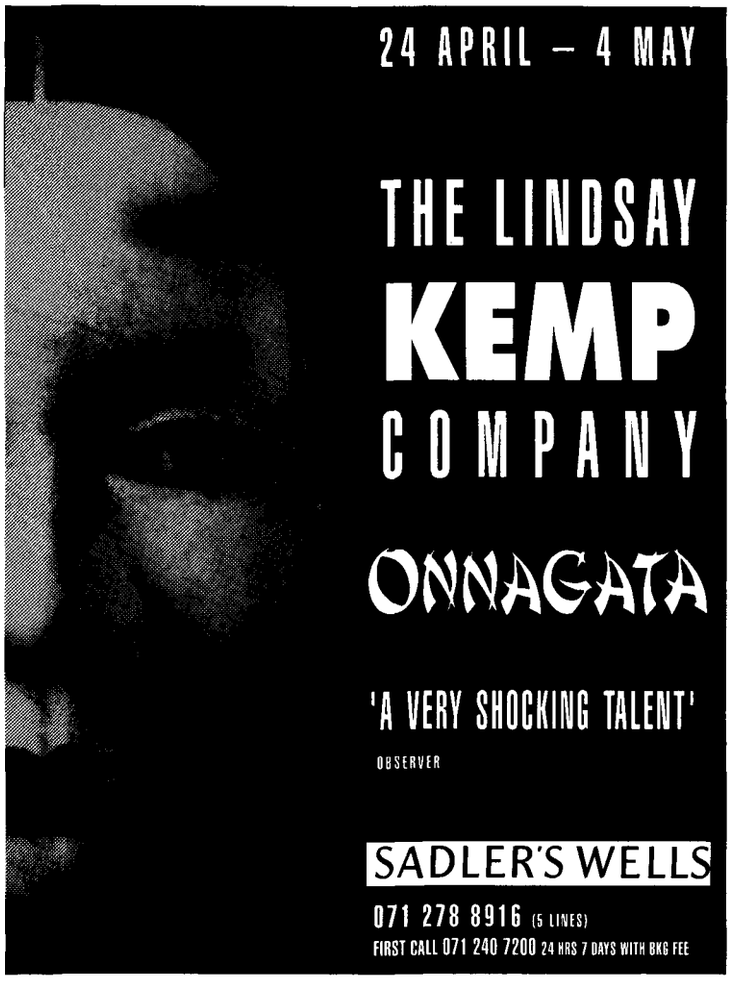


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down an amendment saying that we thought that sanctions should have been given longer. As it was I think we upset a lot of our own supporters, and others in the country, without any real gain in the long run. But we all made clear, including me, that once the fighting started we'd support our troops.

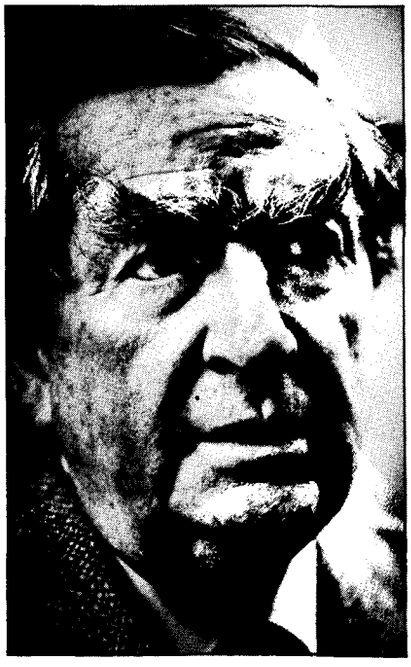
**Why do you think so few people in your kind of position have actually stuck their heads above the parapet and cried 'No'?**

Quite a lot have. If you read the correspondence columns of the papers, you will find a remarkable range of people with diplomatic and military experience taking the same sort of view as I do. I'm bound to say that I meet a lot of people who praise me for speaking up, but don't speak up themselves. But don't mistake my position. Now that we're in the war we've got to bring it to a successful conclusion in a way which gives the best possible chance of lasting peace and security in the area.

**That brings us to the very critical question of the balance of power at the end of all this. At the beginning it appeared as if those who wanted to flog Europe for being an inadequate political animal were going to win, that political union had been put off still further...**

First, can I make two points about the way in which the political constellation has changed since the beginning of August. At that time I was strongly in favour of sanctions, and I supported the dispatch of American troops to Saudi Arabia, according to Bush, to deter an attack on that country; though I would not myself have acceded to an American request to put British ground troops there, and I think many people in the Ministry of Defence argued strongly against that. But the purpose of the operation was completely transformed by Bush's decision to double the number of troops, which was clearly the first step towards a war this year. That is the point at which the coalition began to show strain.

Now two things have happened since then. The end of the cold war gave us real hopes that the Gulf operation could be the seed, round which a new role for the UN would develop. But I am afraid, since then, the Soviet Union has begun to face disintegration and is unlikely to be a major player. The US still wants its verbal support because it is cover for American policy in the Middle East, but that's all it is. Secondly, the moment the decision to go to war was taken in Washington in November, the UN really faded out of the picture. Perez de Cuellar was quite justified in saying that, once the US got its cover for the action, the UN hasn't been consulted, they haven't even been informed until well after decisions have been taken, and actions have followed. It looks more and more like a cover for a *pax americana*. But the Americans have only been able to perform this leadership role because other people are paying, without demanding control of the operation. The Americans haven't allowed the Saudis, or the lower Gulf states, or the Germans or Japanese to say how they



should run the war, or what the objectives should be.

Now the result of all this has been, contrary to some of the nonsense in the British press, a revival of feeling in Europe, that Europe must play a constructive role. And, to pay him credit, I think once Mrs Thatcher had gone Douglas Hurd took advantage of the new leadership to drop the demand for a war crimes tribunal, and he has tried very hard recently to develop a common approach to the postwar situation with France, Germany and Italy, the three key countries. He has also insisted that we will not keep troops on the ground when the war is over, and that a solution must be found by the local governments and not imposed on them by the US and/or Britain. This does give Europe the possibility of a role, perhaps in bringing the war to an end, when unwise forces in Washington may want to continue the war too long, and also to play a role in clearing up the mess afterwards, although it is going to be a terrifying mess.

**Part of that mess may well reside in the South. Do you detect beyond the immediate Islamic world, a deepening of suspicion, and possibly even hatred towards some nations in the North, particularly towards the Americans?**

They see it as imperialism really. Among the non-aligned countries of the Third World, that's a very common view. And it is being expressed in the most unlikely places. For instance, you find the chief of staff of the Pakistani army, which has forces in Saudi Arabia, saying that the war was a Zionist plot, and the Moroccan government, which has troops in the Gulf, supporting a general strike against the war. The conflict, especially if the Americans handle the consequences unwisely, could produce a tremendous anti-Western backlash, particularly in the Muslim world.

My final point is this: the saddest thing about the war is that it shows a gross lack of proportion. For Europe, infinitely the most important thing is to help eastern Europe to have a social market economy, and to have some sort of pluralistic democracy. They cannot achieve it without aid on a much greater scale than is contemplated at the moment by anyone except the Germans. The Germans, who are so widely attacked for not coughing up more for a war on which they weren't consulted, are the only Western country making real sacrifices, not only to integrate East Germany, which is costing them 150 billion Dm this year, but also to help Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and even the Soviet Union.

**What about Iraq's first usage of the word 'withdrawal' on February 15?**

It was very carefully calculated to maximise support for Iraq in the Middle East, since all the conditions for an Iraqi withdrawal look not only reasonable but also desirable to ordinary Arabs. I think President Bush made a great mistake in unilaterally rejecting it out of hand, and an even greater mistake in appealing to the Iraqi army to overthrow Hussein. Of course an offer to withdraw was unacceptable accompanied by all those conditions. But it was the first time Saddam Hussein had ever offered to withdraw his troops from Kuwait. So the coalition should have given a reasoned reply, welcoming the offer to withdraw and saying that all the other issues are open for discussion once the withdrawal has taken place and a ceasefire is in operation. In my opinion, an increasing number of European and other governments will now press the US to take this line.●



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**Ian Davidson** forecasts a European thaw

# Community Policing

**Europe's disarray in the face of the Gulf crisis has become one of the most frequent topics of ironic comment. In December, you hear people say, the Com**munity was talking loftily about putting together a common European foreign and security policy; but when the war started in January, they all went their separate ways. The Germans opted out of the hostilities entirely, the French sent an ambiguous little contingent, and only the British were fully committed alongside their American allies. As for the Belgians or the Portuguese, the less said the better.

Old-fashioned nationalists and Thatcherites may draw the triumphant inference that the Gulf war has exposed the futility of the Community's foreign policy ambitions. But it would probably be a mistake to draw any such sweeping conclusion, either for the short or for the long term.

For the long term, today's crisis is obviously a poor guide. Defence and foreign policy have long been bedrock attributes of the nation state, and each European nation has entrenched national attitudes and distinct national interests. But economic and commercial policy are also bedrock attributes of the nation state, and the members of the Community have long transferred commercial policy to the Community, while most of them clearly intend to transfer monetary policy to the Community as well. The history of the Community is the history of the pooling of policies previously attributed exclusively to nation states; so the same may well happen to foreign and security policy.

The short term poses questions which are intrinsically more interesting, and to which the answers may be more surprising. It may seem natural to assume that the divergences between different European countries, which we now observe in the war phase of the Gulf crisis, will automatically be prolonged in the postwar phase as well.

One might suppose, for example, that the British would be likely to emerge from the war rejoicing in a warm nostalgic glow as the gallant kid brothers of the American heroes; that the British (and the Americans) would be profoundly alienated from the stay-at-home Germans; and that the French would be left uneasily high and dry in the middle.

There is in fact no compelling logic in any of these assumptions; not merely is there no reason for assuming that Britain and Germany will have opposite policies in the postwar phase, there are real grounds for supposing that the major European countries will then start to have convergent policies.

There are basically three reasons for this prediction. The first is that the principal postwar task will be the search for peace, an idea which will naturally commend itself both to those who have taken part in the war, and to those who have not. And those European countries which have not taken part in the fighting may have peace-making credentials in the Arab world at least as good as those who have.

The second reason is that the ending of the war, like the starting of it, will require the intermediation of the UN; and the Europeans, who progressively voted for all the Security Council resolutions which opened the door to war, will naturally seek another series of resolutions to close it again.

The third reason is that all the Community countries are collectively committed to the principle of an international conference for handling the Middle East's problems. They have long been committed to the idea of such a conference for dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict; they are now committed to the idea of such a conference for negotiating a Gulf peace; there is no obvious way to keep the two ideas apart.

In combination, these three reasons are likely to draw the members of the European Community closer together in the postwar phase; they are also likely to open up a large divergence of views between Europe and the US.

Throughout the build-up of the Gulf crisis, the US very skilfully used the institution of the UN Security Council to mobilise international support against Iraq. It turns out, however, that the eviction of Iraq from Kuwait by force is not a simple military matter, and that in the process of trying to bring it about, the US has been leading the coalition towards tactical objectives, and perhaps strategic war aims, which are much wider. This is not a criticism; war is not controllable.

The result is, however, that the termination of the war, and the construction of the peace, will also involve much wider considerations than seemed to be implied by the UN resolutions. The British and the French governments have already started talking, out loud and to each other, about the possible ingredients of a peace process. But one of the unavoidable items on the agenda, in any United Nations process, will be the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Israeli government is firmly opposed to getting dragged into any post-Gulf negotiations; having shown enough restraint to stay out of the war, they will claim the privilege of being allowed to stay out of the peace as well. The US appears to endorse this claim. The dilemma for the Americans is that, if they reject the argument that Israel must be part of the Middle East peace process, they may be unable to secure international endorsement for any settlement procedure; so they could be left with the invidious alternatives of an ignominious withdrawal or a long-term military presence.

**'Postwar, one might suppose that the British would be profoundly alienated from the stay-at-home Germans and that the French would be left uneasily high and dry'**

For the US, a long-term military presence in the Gulf is just about a feasible policy, even if it is not attractive. But no European country, not even Britain, is going to take on the burden of a post-imperial military presence in the Persian Gulf.

The Americans may come round to the idea that the termination of the war must be mediated through the UN; they may even reluctantly come round to the idea that Israel must make a contribution to the peace. But if not, we may find that Britain, which entered the war arm-in-arm with the US, will leave it arm-in-arm with the Europeans.●

Illustration: Michael Sheehy



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Dubliner **Colm Tóibín** isn't sure what to celebrate in 1991

# No Such City

From Dubliners by Tony O'Shea and Colm Toibin, published by Macdonald Illustrated

Dublin has been chosen as the European City Of Culture for 1991. The title sits uneasily on a place which is, for very good reasons, unsure of its own identity. It sometimes seems that there is no such place as Dublin. Every definition of it can be swiftly undermined, so there's inevitable uncertainty about what it is that we should be celebrating. In the meantime, 1991 is also the 75th anniversary of the 1916 Rising and nobody is quite sure what to do about that either. But perhaps the breakdown in the city's sense of itself is as useful an emblem as any for Europe as it uneasily approaches 1992.

In 1967, Charles Haughey, then minster for finance in the Irish government, made a speech on opening a new building on St. Stephen's Green in Dublin in which he said: 'I for one, have never believed that all architectural taste and building excellence ceased automatically with the passing of the 18th century.'

That same year, Haughey bought a house designed by the 18th-century architect Gandon and a farm outside the city. He sold his old house and the land around it for £200,000, having bought it for £50,000 some 10 years earlier. He was simply lucky, perhaps, that the land which he sold had been allocated for residential purposes in a period when a new suburban city was coming into being. The new suburbs have seven houses to the acre, whereas the old city had 30. Throughout the 60s and 70s, they were built piecemeal without proper facilities while the city centre was destroyed by property developers.

Dublin has never been an important element in the mythology of Irish nationalism. The country's founders, those who led the 1916 Rising, were given little support by the people of the city. The leaders saw the Ireland of



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**Ian Tucker**'s guide to would-be Dubliners

# Euro-Eire

**The closest most of us get to Irish culture is a pint of Guinness and the first few pages of *Ulysses*. If you want to experience more, 1991 has to be the year for a visit. For a cheap standby ticket, ring Capital Airways (0345 800777) or for travel in a more traditional style (all 3½ hours of it) try the Holyhead to Dublin ferry.**

**Before you set off, get a copy of the *Rough Guide To Ireland* (Harrap-Columbus, £6.95) and pop some mood-setting Sinead O'Connor in your walkman. After you've swapped your pounds for punts, and you're looking for a bed to rest your jet-lagged body try Isaac's, a comfortable hotel in Frenchman's Lane.**

**This year St. Patrick's Day (March 17) marks the beginning of the 'European City of Culture' celebrations. It might not be as exotic as Rio, but a day spent bobbing and weaving between the marching bands and floats – and pubs – should aquaint you with the Dublin spirit.**

**If all this excitement drains you and you feel the need for a caffeine boost try the marble interior of Bewley's coffee house on Grafton St. For something more wholesome, try Colony's just down the road, where you can find vegetarian food, which is notoriously hard to track down in Dublin.**

**For a more sombre aesthetic experience visit the Municipal Gallery's showing of the Berlinische Galerie Collection. The exhibition covers 20th-century German art, including that of the Weimar Republic and the 'degenerate art' banned by the Nazis.**

**Not much Irish culture on show here, but the international flavour of events is a further reflection of the European identity of Dublin in the 1990s.**

**Welfare State International's street theatre production of the mythologised life of Alfred Nobel, 'Lord Dynamite', on April 13 should be worth a visit. Nobel left the world two inventions – dynamite and his eponymous peace prize. For other left-of-field theatre events check what's on at the enterprising Project Arts Centre, in East Sussex Street.**

**You might want to arrive early for the celebrations to allow yourself to catch the annual Dublin Film Festival (February 28 – March 8). Most of the celluloid on offer is not home-produced. French films dominate the programme, including Patrice Leconte's autobiographical *The Hairdresser's Husband*, an off-beat film about one man's infatuation with hairdressers.**

**There's also a rare chance to see Claude Chabrol's *Story Of Women*, a factually based tale of a wartime backstreet abortionist. The film was named best foreign film by the New York Film Critics Circle last year.**

**If you're still around on April 28, and you're suffering from high-culture overload, lay your hands on a ticket for the Ceiliúradh Slógadh rock/folk concert at the Olympia Theatre. Acts include Hothouse Flowers and Clannad (check the music listings magazine *Hot Press*). By this time you should be ready to get home and start saving for your annual trip to the Edinburgh Festival, or maybe the 1992 Barcelona Olympics.●**

the future as rural, self-sufficient, Gaelic speaking, Catholic and well-protected from the filthy modern tide.

Dublin, on the other hand, was a complex place, a port, almost a British city. Its people, as exemplified in the plays of Sean O'Casey and Denis Johnston, had very little time for the pieties of Irish nationalism. So in the 60s, when serious money came to Ireland as a result of determined government policy to encourage foreign investment in the country, it was possible for a nationalist to become involved in tearing the heart out of Dublin while extolling the virtues of Irish freedom. In some ways, Dublin, with its Georgian heritage and imperial status, was always less than Irish anyway, it was alien, excluded from the list of sacred places.

Dublin's culture might be found in the ghost city we half remember, half imagine. In the alley-ways which led from Dame Street down to the river, now covered by the Central Bank. Maybe it's in the re-discovered Viking city, now covered over by the Civic Offices. Or in the old pubs, demolished for road-widening and the derelict areas, which look like bomb-sites. The 'City of Culture' accolade will perhaps be an opportunity for the people of Dublin to howl in protest at what the Dublin Corporation and the Irish government have done to the city.

If the city's culture lies in its heritage, its great literary tradition – Wilde, Shaw, Joyce, Beckett, O'Casey and all that – then surely the celebrations must involve a recognition that they found the city less than congenial and got out as soon as they could? Or is the genuine Dublin culture to be found in the new sprawling suburbs with its run-down libraries and shopping malls? This is where most of the best new writing is coming from. But because of its fierce realism and deep antipathy to authority (whether it comes in the guise of nationalism of Catholicism), this culture is likely to resist any attempt to include it in the cosy consensus of Dublin as Europe's cultural capital.

There will be celebrations, a writers' conference, a number of important art shows, street theatre and circuses. But the central issues will not go away. They have destroyed the city on us and become rich on the pickings. They have built suburbs and left them stranded, separate from the 'official' culture. The writer Dermot Bolger describes his growing-up in Finglas, a city suburb, as 'internal exile'.

There is no such place as Dublin, then. But in the same year we now have two opportunities to celebrate: our capital city of culture on one hand, and our Great Rebellion on the other. The 50th anniversary of the Rising was celebrated with great gusto in 1966. Suddenly, blood sacrifice and small armed groups rising up against the state seemed worthy of three cheers. A few years later, when Northern Ireland blew up, Irish nationalism south of the border was shown to be a sham, something to wave flags about on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, but to be kept behind bars under emergency legislation the rest of the week. It was, for some, a bitter lesson indeed.

Twenty-five years later, nobody is comfortable with either of the celebrations to which the city is host – not even those in charge. This fact is a cause for mild celebration in itself. The consensus about the ideals of Irish nationalism is gone and the rhetoric of 1966 is no longer possible.

We know that nationalist ideology has not saved our capital city from the speculators and we know, too, that anything good in our political and artistic life comes from the unofficial city, the hidden lives. Any real celebrations in Dublin this year are likely to be laced with black humour, bitterness and irony, as well as laughter, wit and mockery. 1991 might be a year well-spent after all as we finally come to pay such a meaningful tribute to Wilde, Shaw, Joyce, Beckett and O'Casey.●



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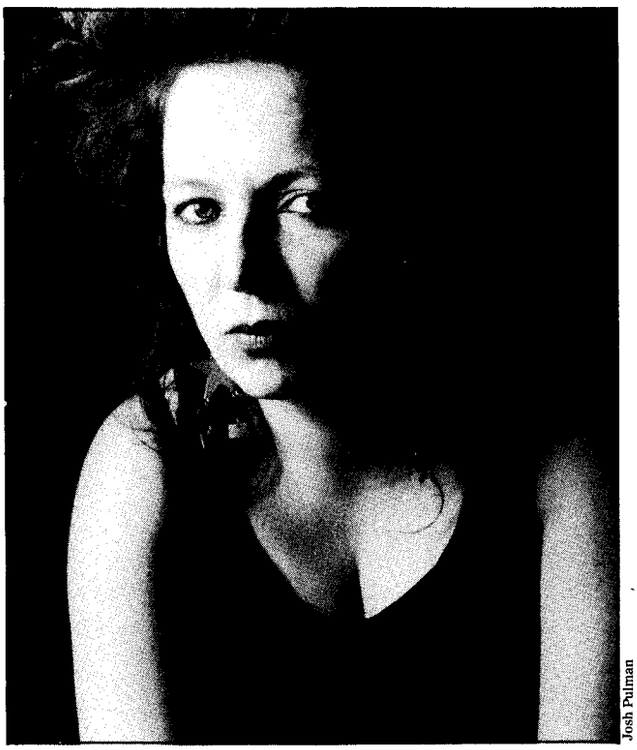
## Suzanne Moore



Josh Pulman

The public and private gulf

# Birth And Death

I am not really in a position to write this column. Or maybe I am in the perfect position to write it, as I have spent the last week slumped on the sofa, watching the war. And waiting. Waiting for something to happen. And waiting to go into labour.

Like most women in the last week of pregnancy I am not blooming. I am big, bored and uncomfortable. The baby has gone past the sell-by date given by the hospital, but there is not a lot I can do except dig in on the front-line. If it wasn't for the Great Video Game in the sky, I'd probably be reduced to watching *The Young Doctors*.

In between Dimbleby and Paxman, I avidly follow Miriam Stoppard's advice: 'Start to neglect parts of your domestic life. Allow the non-essentials to slide and don't worry about them'. Then I worry about that. After all this is the woman whose husband has just run off with Felicity Kendal. I read reports that convoys of 'our boys' are hopelessly blundering about in the desert, completely lost within 30 miles of the Kuwaiti frontier.

They don't even have basic maps. Mass graves are already being dug. There is nothing that destroys morale more than seeing bodies lying around. This is not tasteless. This is war. Lulu's record *Boom Bang-A-Bang*; now that is tasteless, according to the BBC, who have banned it, alongside *Give Peace A Chance*.

A psychologist is brought into the studio to comment on 'stress'. At least it interrupts the flow of retired vice-marshalls. He informs us that 'even soldiers have nervous systems and respond to life-threatening signals'. Some even resort in the middle of a battle to lying motionless in a foetal position.

Well, this is certainly what the war is doing to me. I scan the papers daily but there is less and less information and more and more detail. My six-year old daughter has ominously started making paper aeroplanes and dividing them into teams. Yellow, blue, green, pink. Is she playing war? No, she is 'playing airports'. Am I getting paranoid?

A neighbour asks when the baby is due. 'All battle-stations at the ready', he comments, and then is totally embarrassed at his choice of phrase. I don't mind. Maybe it's my hormones, but there seems something increasingly similar about the language of war and the language of childbirth. All is euphemistic denial of the one fact of both. Pain.

Sheila Kitzinger, childbirth guru, talks about the 'functional' pain of labour as though somehow it reduced its intensity. I wonder how long it takes to be burnt alive in a blazing Tornado? Is that 'functional' pain too? At least in the post-Gazza era in which we now find ourselves, several soldiers have admitted to a level of fear that makes them cry their eyes out. Officers' stiff upper lips have trembled as they resort to psychobabble about teaching their boys to 'confront their feelings'. You can see it's a damn sight more difficult than getting them to confront the Iraqis.

But as the men in suits – the politicians – give way to the men in the studios – the experts – it seems too obvious even to mention the fact that these days there is hardly a woman's face to be seen on television. But then, how many ex-air commanders did I really expect to be female? And there are not even that many men's faces. The same old commentators are wheeled from channel to channel to comment on the same snippets of film. It's a lucrative business. One American general who was fired for revealing that the US would bomb 'downtown Baghdad' is now working for CBS. In two months he will earn what he earned in a year working for the Pentagon.

The other morning, two tv channels were reduced to discussion of whether there had been too much war coverage. Whatever else, the media is scoring a direct hit on itself. CNN may have already won the war, but media dissent or even scepticism has been severely carpet-bombed. Misinformation, disinformation or plain bloody lies have been delivered right on target. Whatever happened to post-modern cynicism? How come we have believed what we have seen and seen what we have believed?

John Pilger may point us back to the lessons of Vietnam or even the Falklands, but we also live day-to-day with distorted coverage of Ireland and it doesn't seem to bother us too much. In fact over the last week I have had more sympathy with the likes of Max Hastings who say quite simply that it is the job of the press to reflect the government position. At least you know where you stand.

A few days ago when I was hooked up to a foetal monitor, a midwife rushed in, not to ask how I was, but to see if I knew the latest on the war. 'No, nothing much has happened, except they've bombed Tel Aviv'. Yet already the urgent need to know what is happening is fading. Because we are realising what television cannot admit; that nothing much happens for long periods of time. How long before we lose interest? Who really understands the politics of the Middle East anyway? Isn't a game of Scuds versus Patriots a lot easier to play?

Tony Benn is right to be dismayed at the talk of 'firework displays bigger than the Fourth of July', but he's wrong to deny that on some level this is what war has become. I can say this because I am lucky enough to live in the other gulf – the gulf between the personal and the political – that such events open up. And because death is still as difficult to imagine as birth; both are hidden away. So we all resort to cliches like, 'Even in war, life goes on'. And so it does.

I flick through *Name Your Baby* with its 'Special Baby Personality Horoscope'. I wonder what sign Saddam is. The baby will be an Aquarius, just like those famous peace-lovers, Ronald Reagan and John McEnroe. Thinking of a boy's name is harder than thinking of a girl's. The only one I can come up with is Scud. Scud Moore. I quite like it. Sounds like an American novelist.●



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FORUM

# Taking Liberties

*From Andrew Puddephatt, General Secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties*

Last December, Judge Rant jailed eight men for consensual activities (*MT* February): sado-masochistic (S&M) sexual practices carried out by homosexual men – in private.

There is no statutory right to privacy in the UK. This is in contrast to most other EC countries, Australia, Canada and the USA. There is also no express recognition of the right to individual privacy in English common law.

Most privacy acts cover protection of personal information. However, cases taken under the European Convention of Human Rights have also afforded protection to individual lifestyles. As a result of a case heard by the Convention in 1976, in which the outlawing of homosexuality was considered to be a breach of privacy, homosexual acts between consenting adults over 21 were decriminalised in Northern Ireland.

The National Council for Civil Liberties (Liberty) believes that it is unacceptable that we have no legal right to privacy in this country and that individuals have to look to Europe – waiting many years for a result – for protection against arbitrary interference with this right. We need a privacy act, covering areas which are amenable to specific legislative control, to supplement the inadequate protection provided by the Data Protection Act.

Both the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats have expressed a commitment to introducing legislation of this kind. But this is not enough. A general right to privacy needs to be enshrined in a British bill of rights which protects private lives and tastes from the interference of the state. The incorporation of the European Convention into British law would mean that British judges would be bound to consider these principles when making their judgements.

One of the most frequent criticisms of a bill of rights is the power of interpretation it would afford to the judiciary. However, as the S&M trial illustrated, the judges effectively have this power already in many areas. At least a bill of rights would provide standards – laid down by parliament – against which our judiciary would have to operate.●

*From Ros Caveney, a freelance journalist*

Much of what Suzanne Moore argues in her piece (*MT* February) is entirely welcome; the prosecution of a group of sado-masochists is only one of a sequence of events – most recently the provisions of Clause 25 of the Criminal Justice bill – which look uncommonly like the recriminalisation of homosexuality by stealth.

There are times when attacks on the lesbian and gay communities seem very clearly to be an attempted stirring-up of popular hatred as a diversion of attention from society's real problems, and times when the readiness of the government to pander to that hatred looks even more sinister. Rarely has it been so clear that freedom is indivisible, and that attacks on one set of civil liberties are likely to be a part of a projected destruction of all such freedoms.

It is because of the universality of the threat to freedom contained in homophobia that it becomes highly important that we try to avoid both the language which dissociates us from sexual acts by others in which we do not want to participate, and the attitudes which that language represents.

Suzanne Moore rightly condemns Judge Rant's reference to 'brute homosexual activity', but she still reserves the right to consider other people's consensual sexual choices distasteful and disgusting, even while rejecting the idea of criminalising them. But, as she herself points out, the particular activities for which the Shropshire group were prosecuted exist on a continuum with a large number of more common acts, many of which must have been criminalised by the Rant decision; if the breaking of skin suffices for a conviction of assault, even moderately rough sex becomes problematic.

Gayle Rubin has productively suggested that the whole idea of having more and less acceptable areas of consensual sexual activity is one of the concepts which ensures that the oppression of sexual minorities will continue. If we are to combat any attempt of the Right to exploit issues involving sexuality in order to hang onto power, we cannot afford to neglect the virtue of solidarity – which involves a certain restraint concerning our feelings about what other people do in bed.●

*From Angus Hamilton, a solicitor who represented one of the defendants in the case*

Prior to the sado-masochism case at the Old Bailey, the law on what type of physical harm a person might consent to was, at the very least, uncertain. The judge's decision may establish certainty in respect of S&M activities, but it adds another layer of inconsistency to the law's view of consensual assaults. The nearest precedent – which dates from the 30s – involved an incident of non-consensual heterosexual spanking in which only academic consideration was given to the effect which consent might have had. Therefore, this could hardly be regarded as a binding precedent.

English law will permit quite severe injuries to be inflicted in the course of sport – a fractured skull in a playground incident was sanctioned on this basis. Surgery, an obvious form of consensual assault, is also, understandably, permitted. But what of cosmetic surgery? A clear example of quite unpleasant physical damage, requiring weeks of recovery and inflicted purely for the 'pleasure' of the recipient – yet permitted by the law.

It is clear that it was the sexual context (and in particular, despite the judge's protestations to the contrary, the *gay* sexual context) of the 'assaults' that provoked Judge Rant's ruling against consent being used as a defence and the harsh sentences which followed.

The activities in the S&M case were, essentially, victimless crimes. There was not even evidence of men initially without such predilections enduring a process of seduction. And yet, to justify the rulings and sentences, victims had to be found. In passing sentence, Rant referred, overtly, to 'society' being the victim, but he obviously felt the need to establish more tangible ones, since, despite their full co-operation in all the activities, it was the 'masochists' in the case who went free, and the 'sadists' who received the immediate custodial sentences. In adopting this approach the judge has neatly established a potential blackmailers' charter.●

## Temple's Children

Nina Temple (*MT* December) refers to 'Thatcher's children'. As a 19 year-old student, I presume I am one of these. It seems that her analysis of what my generation needs in the form of political inspiration, while being ultimately sound in its conclusion, misses a vital point.

For a generation which has known nothing but Thatcherism, passions are indeed fired by the idea of a pragmatic alternative to Conservative rule. To those of us whose early political memories are of a labour movement torn apart by militant rhetoric and Scargill's leninism, the prospect of actually removing the Conservatives is inspiration enough.

This is not to say that radicalism is dead; far from it. But any political project which hopes to inspire 'Thatcher's children' must be rooted in a new kind of pragmatism, one which takes into account political realities and realises that the immediate goal of a higher standard of living and a greater degree of self-determination for all is as important as the long-term goal of a classless society. This is why the notion of a cross-party association must not be allowed to slip away.

Those within the Communist Party opposing the new moves should look at where the most radical of my generation are turning for political identity. The rise of Class War, who have no distinctive ideology apart from rabid anti-authoritarianism, represents an obvious reaction to the marxist-leninist model of political organisation which prevailed on the left up to the early 1980s. If the energies of these young people are to be directed along constructive lines, the proposed new political formation is undoubtedly the best way to achieve it.

The authoritarianism of a party will never find support among many of those young people, whose culture is so distinctively post-punk. Political parties have their place, but there is a desperate need for a formation which can unite those attracted to post-punk anarchism, those desperate for any kind of reform, and those engaged in all the various fields of opposition amongst my generation. What is proposed is just such a formation: we must not miss this opportunity.●

*Jeremy Gilbert, Merseyside*



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# Stone, Paper... Fist

Charles Jencks (*MT* February) outlines the structural changes in the 'old world order' fairly well, but his analysis of their political consequences is wildly awry. His thesis that the political coalition against Iraq has been assembled according to new precepts, and heralds the emergence of a new power structure, is entirely wrong. The actual conduct of the war demonstrates clearly that the UN sanction for the war is a fig leaf of Korean proportions, and that paper wraps stone is less accurate a metaphor than velvet wraps fist.

The mistake that Jencks makes is to assume that the changes in the political settlement will be led from the top by George Bush, and will precede the war. Of the great settlements in the European tradition since the Congress of Vienna, only the Congress of Berlin, which effectively finalised the allocation of the world's population to the jurisdiction of a 'modern' state, was not the end product of a ruinous war. The political/military coalition against Iraq, consisting of a cold war Nato axis and a cluster of militarily semi-detached comprador states, reflects the old order, not the new.

The allied strategy further demonstrates this. Iraq is to be rapidly defeated. Ideally there will be no defections from the allied coalition, and only Iraq will be actively engaged as an enemy force.

It is Saddam Hussein, the barbarian at the gate, who will herald the new world order, if anyone does. His subtle military strategy – sending Scuds to Tel Aviv, opening the land battle by *attacking* the US forces, parking up the air force in Iran for future use – could still transform the war. Significant defections from the coalition, or the active political defection of their populations, could trigger the widening of the war, as he wants.

It is this expanded war that might complete the process of American decline. The modern nation states, the product of 1945 above all, the grown-up children of the empires, are breaking free from their chaperones. The US economic hegemony, which allowed it to be the policeman of the world, cracked irretrievably in March 1968. The dollar crisis and the abandonment of the Gold Standard signaled the beginning of the end of the dollar bloc and led to the inevitable American withdrawal from Vietnam.

The new world order will be born out of Saddam Hussein's war or not at all, and the winners will be they who also stand and wait, Germany and Japan. This is, of course, conditional on their preservation of their trump cards – strong economies – for the peace conference, by being politically pro-American but militarily neutral. They will be the *constitutional* monarchs of the new world. Just what form this 'glorious revolution' will take is beyond our ken at the moment. However, if the US wins, and imposes an old-fashioned *pax americana*, then we can confidently predict a rematch in the future.●

*Aigneis Nic Ghille Aindreis, Edinburgh*

## New World Bosses

I note that while Charles Jencks (*MT* February) believes in the existence of a new world order, he is rather sceptical about what it all means. Might I suggest that before he ponders further, Mr Jencks has a listen to the Pete Townshend song *Won't Get Fooled Again*, where he will find the line, 'Meet the new boss, same as the old boss'. Seems so.●

*Charlie Murray, London*

## Reading Together

Having read the resolution of the 1990 Congress of the Communist Party, I am in broad agreement with the positions adopted, except for one: I do not see the need for an 'association' alongside the Party. Surely it would be a drain on Party resources that it can ill afford.

A much better way of building alliances is the network which already exists all over Britain: *Marxism Today* readers' groups, composed of members and friends of the CP. This is a movement which has grown in the only way that alliances can, from the bottom up; it is not merely a discussion group, but a real movement engaged in real debate. This is what we should be concentrating on, rather than indulging in ambitious yet not immediately helpful plans.

I hope that the Party can use *Marxism Today* as its 'front door', and as a major interface with the wider movement: *MT* has done more than anything else to build up the prestige of the CP, and that contribution should never be forgotten.●

*Brian Precious, Oldham*

## Semper Fidelis

I found the roundtable on fidelity (*MT* February) fascinating reading, but intensely depressing as well. It is a sad reflection on relationships today that a group of strangers can have this kind of discussion, while, even in the light of the Aids crisis, lovers still cannot.●

*Paula Price, Boreham Wood*

## Time To Economise

A reduction in interest rates, albeit difficult given our currency's position within the Exchange Rate Mechanism, may well be necessary if we are to avoid an even deeper recession. However, such an adjustment in monetary policy will not solve the structural weaknesses of the British economy to which Andrew Gamble has referred (*MT* January).

These weaknesses include: the concentration on short-term rather than long-term investment; archaic industrial relations and the absence of a national wage-bargaining policy; discrimination on the grounds of race, gender and disability; the failure to develop a fully and flexibly-trained workforce, and, lastly, the kind of regional political structures that could initiate new economic and investment strategies.

These deep structural problems are cultural and political as well as economic, and will require far more than the odd adjustment to monetary or fiscal policy if we are to begin to solve them. In many respects we have wasted the last 40 years by our failure to address these problems, preferring instead to concentrate on short-term, electorally convenient policies. The consequences of this failure are all too apparent: a huge gap between domestic consumption and production; massive regional inequalities; the decline in our manufacturing base; long-term unemployment, low pay and poverty for some.

Surely it is now time to start a national debate on the long-term future of the economy. If we fail to do so, economic policies will remain more show than substance and the unemployed, the low-paid and others on low incomes, as well as manufacturing industries and small businesses, will continue to suffer as we lurch from one recession to the next.●

*Jonathan Fry, Yorkshire and Humberside Low Pay Unit*

## The Sun Rising

'*Marxism Today* – Where no magazine has gone before'. Sadly, judging by the advertisements on pages 2 and 47 of February's edition ('Blind Date' and 'Mandate'), you are going where all too many have gone before. Why not change the name to *The Sun* or some other sporty title?●

*David and Marjorie Drysdale, Angus*

Cartoon: Nick Newman

## Editorial Note:

We welcome your letters to add to discussion. Please send them to *MT* Letters, 6-9 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF. Brevity means you are more likely to be published. We reserve the right to cut.●



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Luigi Baldelli/Select

The crisis in the Gulf is a reminder that war changes everything. As yet nobody knows what its ramifications will be, though it is clear they will be enormous. In our features section, a team of specialists analyse the meaning and long-term implications of the war. **Mary Kaldor** and **Neal Ascherson** look at what the Gulf war might mean for the new world order. **Michael Gilsenan** argues the case against the war. **Maxime Rodinson** discusses the nature of Arab nationalism. **George Joffe** looks at the future of the Middle East after the Gulf war. **Ghada Karmi** explains why Arabs support Saddam Hussein. **Sarah Benton** discusses the paralysis of political debate on the Gulf in Britain.



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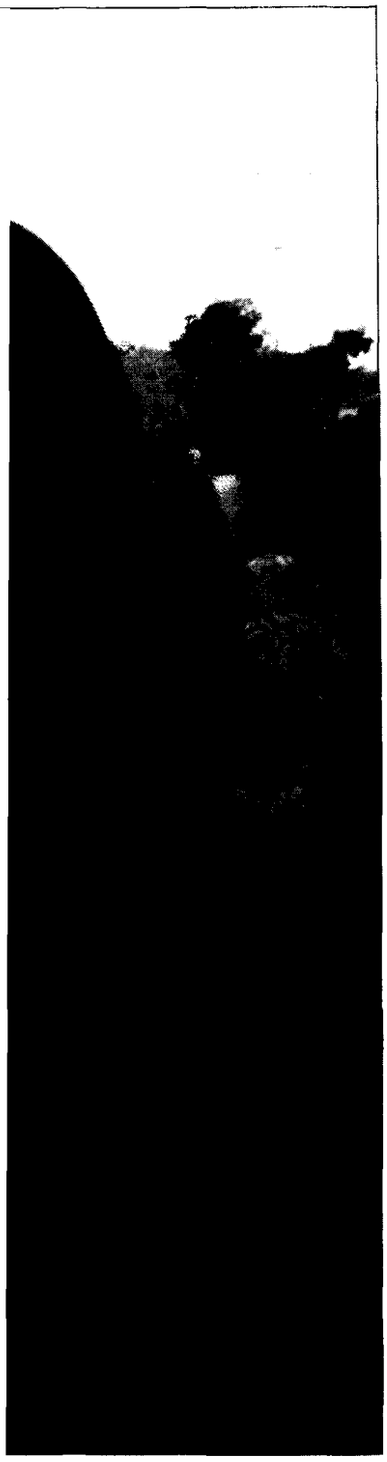

How did we get into this war? It is only a year since the cold war ended. This time last year, most of us believed that we were on the threshold of a new era of peace and co-operation in international affairs. How was that mood of optimistic euphoria so rapidly smashed? How is it that the United States' (and British) military machine – more American troops and weapons than in Europe at the height of the cold war – is pounding away, day after day, at a low-tech Third World enemy?

Of course, it was a great achievement that the United Nations reacted so promptly to the invasion of Kuwait by a dictator capable of almost infinite nastiness. Compared with all those other invasions – China in Tibet, Indonesia in East Timor, Israel in the Lebanon, etc – it was heartwarming to witness the way in which the world community was taking a stand against an act of gross injustice and imposing unprecedented economic sanctions. So what went wrong? How did this global co-operation degenerate into a war led by the United States and Britain? How did the United Nations get hijacked into becoming an institution for war-making? How is it possible that what will prove to be an act of technological genocide has been carried out in the name of international law?

Some would argue that the answer is the Western interest in oil, that the United States and Britain cynically exploited moral abhorrence at Saddam Hussein's behaviour. After all, Western countries had earlier supported Iraq in the war with Iran, even though it was started by an illegal Iraqi act of aggression. Douglas Hurd, writing in *The Guardian* (January 24, 1991) cheerfully admits the interest in oil. After occupying Kuwait, he argues, Iraq controls 18% of the world's oil reserves. And if it were to invade Saudi Arabia, it would control 44% of the world's oil reserves. But, in that case, would it not have been enough to defend Saudi Arabia and maintain the pressure on Saddam Hussein through sanctions? Surely, this war is doing greater damage to global oil supplies than a hard currency starved Iraq would have done?

A more plausible explanation has to do with the end of the cold war. This war has to be explained in terms of the collapse of the old order – not simply in the sense that the United States was left as the only superpower, but in the more profound sense that the collapse of the old order has far-reaching consequences for American society and politics, that this war is a defensive reaction to the deep disturbance caused by the end of the cold war. To develop this explanation and to assess the consequences of the war, it is necessary to understand how the world order was organised up to 1989.

**The cold war was a way of organising global** relations. The orthodox construction of the cold war, shared by both Left and Right, is that it was a deep-rooted conflict between East and West. It was the threat of military power, deterrence, that prevented war from breaking out. Left and Right differed only on the nature of this conflict. For the Right, this was a conflict between freedom and totalitarianism. For the Left, this was a conflict between capitalism and socialism. Alternatively, for both Left and Right, this was a form of great power rivalry. There is another way of understanding the cold war, not as a conflict but as a kind of collusion, although the term 'collusion' perhaps implies too much conscious purpose. There were two distinct systems in East and West: the Fordist variant of capitalism, and the stalinist or post-stalinist variant of socialism. But they were not in conflict. They needed each other, they complemented each other, they were bound together in a joint world order that defined the period 1948–1989.

The military confrontation which represented this world order has to be viewed not as deterrence but as imaginary war. It was not that both sides were preparing for some future war to deter the other side. Rather, both sides were conducting a war in the imagination. Day after day, in military exercises, scenarios, games of espionage and hostile rhetoric, both sides behaved as though the second world war had never ended. And this had profound consequences for the functioning of each system. The second world war had solved certain intractable economic and social problems. The imaginary war, at least for the first 20 years after the war, reproduced the solutions of the second world war. It created a wartime atmosphere which could be used to manage the economy and to generate social cohesion.

**'The imaginary war, at least for the first 20 years after the war, reproduced the solutions of the second world war'**

For the West, the imaginary war could be said to have defined the era of Fordist capitalism. It could be described as the Fordist method of international political regulation. This is not to say that it was the consequence of the rise of Fordism (ie, the changes that were taking place during the first half of the 20th century in capitalist methods of production). Rather, it was a way of coping with some of the contradictions thrown up by the rise of Fordism. It came about not for economic reasons but as a consequence of complex political processes. Many of the characteristics of the post-war period which we associate with Fordism, for example, high levels of military spending or private consumption, could just as well be explained in terms of the political institutions which shaped the Fordist era.

The second world war had solved the problems of the 1930s depression. It resulted in a massive increase in government spending both in the United States and in Europe and it created a bipartisan consensus, a sense of political solidarity both domestically and among allies, in the pursuit of shared war aims. Immediately after the war, the United States moved politically to the right and Europe moved dramatically to the left – the prewar establishments had been discredited by appeasement and collaboration. Postwar elections resulted in left governments or left-leaning coalitions in all European countries. The United States cut back on government spending and on financial support to its former allies, despite the fact that the allies were economically devastated and desperate for dollars both because of fiscal conservatism and the leftist nature of the new European governments.

The cold war was a way of recreating a bipartisan consensus and a sense of allied solidarity, at least between America and Britain. The New Dealers in the



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United States were able to mobilise support for big government by emphasising the Soviet threat. The Social Democrat and Labour Parties of western Europe were able to establish their respectability by emphasising their distance from the communists. And this new-found cohesion between governments in the United States and western Europe provided a political framework for the regulation of the international economy (including its financial, trade, and technological aspects) and the spread of Fordism, as well as a method whereby the US was persuaded to spend its surplus dollars.

I do not want to suggest that Stalin had nothing to do with the origins of the cold war. On the contrary, the occupation of eastern Europe and the brutal behaviour of the Red Army was a vital ingredient. It is unlikely that the West could have done anything, at that stage, to prevent the communist takeovers in the late-1940s. Agreement on Germany and the provision of Marshall Aid without strings might have led to a different outcome. However, the division of Germany, the decision to create a West German state, and the establishment of Nato provided a legitimation for the Soviet role in eastern Europe – and vice versa.

The height of the cold war was also the period which has come to be known as the golden age of capitalism. Detente and the new cold war in the 1970s and the 1980s can be viewed as different ways of reacting to the end of the golden age, the faltering of the Fordist formula for capitalist expansion, and the emergence of new policies of capitalist accumulation in West Germany and Japan, based on new post-Fordist technologies.

Vietnam was the turning point. It is no accident that 1971 was the year of the first US trade deficit, the year that the US devalued the dollar and abandoned the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates, and also the year that Nixon and Kissinger went to Moscow and initiated detente. Vietnam was a real war and real wars are much more unpredictable than imaginary wars. Vietnam polarised political opinion instead of recreating social cohesion. Vietnam was expensive; whereas, at the time of Korea, there was a dollar shortage, and increased spending by the United States merely stimulated the American economy, at the time of Vietnam, increased spending led to inflation and a trade deficit.

From the 1970s onwards, the cold war increasingly became an obstacle to economic and political stability. The Atlanticist compromise was challenged from the Left by the new social movements which emerged in the aftermath of Vietnam. And it was criticised on the Right by neo-liberals who favoured a more liberal form of capitalism. American military spending no longer facilitated the expansion of the world economy; instead, it became an obstacle to financial regulation. Because military spending absorbed scientific and technological resources, it contributed to the decline in the competitiveness of American products and, hence, a decline in the US ability to manage the world economy. Essentially, the cold war preserved American power structures and so prevented the emergence of a new set of political institutions which could regulate the post-Fordist global economy, and which could manage and respond to the dramatic changes in the balance of the world economy as a result of the introduction of new methods of production, especially in Japan and Western Europe, based on the intensive use of information technologies.

**The imaginary war consisted of a real** military confrontation, with real soldiers, real weapons and using real resources. The strategies, and the weapons designed for them, that were acted out on the north German plains bore a marked resemblance to the actual experience of the second world war. Civil technology changes continuously in response to changing needs as signalled in the market place. Military technology changes dramatically in wartime, in response to experience on the battlefield. In peacetime military technology tends towards inertia. New inventions are applied only in so far as they fit existing missions and strategies determined in previous wars.

The second world war was a Fordist war. A combination of mass production and the internal combustion engine was responsible for the Allied victory. It was the ability of the United States and the Soviet Union to outproduce Germany that was critical. The monthly aircraft production of Ford's Willow Run Factory was half the peak monthly output of the entire German airframe industry. The war was characterised by mobile offensive operations. The invention of the tank and the aircraft broke through the defensive stalemate that had characterised the first world war.

The Korean war was very similar. In the imaginary war in Europe, both sides re-enacted the style and missions of the second world war. If there were asymmetries on both sides, this is to be explained in terms of the differences on the Western and Eastern fronts. It is as though they were not fighting each other but some phantom German army. This is particularly evident in relation to nuclear weapons. For the US and Britain, nuclear weapons were imagined as terror weapons, as an extension of strategic bombing missions. Intercontinental missiles were viewed as pilotless bombers. The Russians had undertaken little bombing during the war. (Indeed they viewed strategic bombing as barbarous.) For them, nuclear weapons were regarded as an extension of artillery, which had been so crucial in the second world war.

The wars in Vietnam and the Middle East introduced a new dimension into strategic calculation. There had been an enormous increase in the accuracy and destructiveness of all munitions, owing to the introduction of information technologies. Attrition rates for tanks and aircraft increased greatly, sparking off a debate about the implications of the new technologies. One school of thought argued that mobile, offensive operations were no longer possible and future wars would be more like the first world war than the second. The best that could be achieved in western Europe was a dispersed defensive strategy which would bog down an offensive, in case of war, and so give time for negotiation. These ideas were taken up by the peace movement in the early-1980s as an alternative to reliance on nuclear weapons. And they also formed the basis for Gorbachev's concept of 'reasonable sufficiency' and for the way in which the negotiations on conventional force reductions in Europe were conducted.

**'The height of the cold war was also the period which has come to be known as the golden age of capitalism'**

The other school of thought argued that offensive operations remained important and that military technology had to be designed to protect offensive missions and to swamp the defensive with area destruction munitions. Concepts like Emerging Technology, Air-Land Battle, or Deep Strike, involved more complex aircraft with all sorts of electronic counter-measures for protection, the use of various kinds of surface-to-surface and air-to-surface missiles, and a mixture of nuclear, chemical and conventional munitions. Some of the conventional munitions are said to be equivalent in immediate destructiveness to nuclear weapons.

The choice between these two schools of thought could not be based on rational calculations, since these two different approaches could not be tried out in war. In practice, the choice was made on subjective grounds, reflecting the institutional preferences of military planners. Therefore, it was the offensive school which won the procurement battle, and it is these new offensive technologies which are being used in the Gulf war. These technologies could be said to be neo-Fordist – that is they make use of information technologies but within a framework determined in the Fordist era.

**If we understand the cold war as imaginary** war, a situation in which the Fordist variant of capitalism needed the stalinist variant of socialism, in which the two systems were propped up by a never-ending pretend confrontation, then the collapse of communism was bound to lead to a dramatic reaction in the West. The Gulf war could be described as the struggle for control of the post-cold war world order – a bid to retain American leadership, to establish a form of political regulation of the post-Fordist world economy that retains the Fordist political institutions.

Long before the Gulf crisis, American, British and French ministries of defence were warning about the new threat from the South – the increase in missiles and chemical weapons, the danger of fanatics, fundamentalists,



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drug traffickers and so forth. In a remarkable speech, pulsating with mixed metaphors, given at Chatham House in June 1990, George Walden, the Conservative MP, captured the revolutionary impact of the collapse of communism on our institutions. Walden talked about the way in which Britain's role had been artificially inflated by the cold war: 'What could be better calculated to raise the national spirits than a government holding the flag high in the face of the evils of communism, the murderous follies of buffoonish Argentinian generals, and the intrigues of the perfidious French?'

'And now it is gone, all gone... the communists have thrown in the sponge and left us bouncing around in the ring looking for an opponent. With the exception of the Middle East,... Third World heat spots are cooling fast.'

'The question naturally arises, what is British defence and diplomacy for now? In any other sphere of life, when the demand for your product collapses for reasons entirely beyond your control, you don't try to drum up new custom, you wind the business down and go into something more profitable.'

'But there is a disturbing feeling about that something irreversible may be happening in the world and it is not to Britain's advantage. Simply put, the fear is that... Britain's long day in the international sun may be waning; that we shall be forced to spend less time basking on summit slopes and more time digging the national allotment. With the passing of the cold war and the rise of a new Europe, a sense of hope is coupled, in the case of Britain, with a palpable sense of loss.'

If this is how the British were feeling, how much more palpable must have been the sense of loss in the United States, how much more disturbing the feeling that something irreversible was taking place. So many lives, careers, and worldviews had been vested in the cold war. The soul-searching that went on in the security community, in the think tanks and universities throughout the United States in 1990 gives some hint of that 'sense of loss'.

The Gulf war can be viewed as an attempt to reverse the irreversible. Just at the moment when the establishment figures on both sides of the Atlantic were talking about substantial cuts in military spending, when the role of the hawkish political leaders was being eclipsed, when the United States seemed to be floating away from its international role, and new self-confident Europe seemed to be on the verge of creation, Iraq invaded Kuwait. And the cold war procedures, routines and language sprang back into action. American troops were deployed more or less according to a plan, Operation 90–1002, developed in the early-1980s to contain a southward thrust by the Soviet Union. Bush droned on about good and evil, right and wrong, Hitler, Munich, appeasement, using all the same phrases that most of us thought we had heard for the last time, after the revolutions of 1989. European unity disintegrated, the British-American special relationship was revived, the UN went along with US actions, and the Gulf war looked set to become the defining moment of the post-cold war order.

Empires in decline are often dangerous. Domestic power structures are sustained by the imperial role. Paul Kennedy's *The Rise And Fall Of Empires* struck a sensitive chord in the American body politic. Can the Gulf war establish a new international framework, dominated by the US, which would serve as a mechanism for international political regulation in a post-Fordist era? Certainly, it is possible to envisage such an outcome. There is something eerie about this war. It has been presented as remote and 'surgical' – a technological war of such precision that only military targets are hit and all we experience is a tv screen demonstrating the spectacular nature of the equipment, and the helplessness of Third World enemies.

If Saddam Hussein is easily defeated, if the show is a success, and the war does not lose its current popular appeal, then it is possible that the United States, Britain, Israel and Saudi Arabia will establish a permanent military presence in the Gulf. Already the Pentagon is drawing up plans for long-term containment, including the construction of training and recreational facilities for thousands of troops. Douglas Hurd has proposed the establishment of a Gulf Co-operation Council, with Western support, to contain Arab nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism.

The costs of a permanent military presence would be paid by Germany, Japan and oil-rich Arab allies, thus siphoning off excess savings to finance the permanent, long-term external deficits which are likely to be experienced by the US and Britain. It will be a neo-Fordist world in which the priorities of the Fordist era will determine the way in which new information technologies are utilised – a world in which the priorities are military spending and private consumption, and which is energy- and transport-intensive. It will be a stagnating world in which the costs of military adventures and private consumption bear most heavily on people in the Third World via high interest rates, high oil prices and the foregone peace dividend. And it will be an exclusivist world in which the rich countries insulate themselves from the pressure of migration, and the threat of terrorism.

The rich countries will consolidate around the banner of democracy against Saddam Hussein-type enemies in the Middle East, the Third world, and even perhaps in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Saddam Hussein may be defeated and even killed but the Saddam phenomenon will survive and may even be nurtured by the war. This is the phenomenon of fanaticism, fundamentalism, brutality and barbarism – a phenomenon which is a consequence of poverty, frustration and impotence in the face of dwindling resources and the destruction of traditional cultures, together with the readiness of the West to sell weapons and technology either for profit or for short-term geo-political interest. It is possible to envisage a new imaginary war between North and South, neo-Fordism and fundamentalism, modernity and monstrosity. These two distinct systems will feed upon each other through an ongoing confrontation acted out in the Middle East.

**'The imaginary war consisted of a real military confrontation with real soldiers, real weapons and using real resources'**

**However, it could be that the Gulf war** turns out to be more like Vietnam than Korea. It may be the last gasp of American imperialism in the face of decline. The Gulf war could instead mark the beginning of a kind of Western perestroika. First of all, it is very difficult to see how a renewed American hegemony can be sustained economically. This war is very expensive. United States military costs are estimated at $60 billion so far, and UK military costs amount to some £90m, almost the same as the entire 1990/1 defence budget. It is the most costly spectacle on earth and it cannot be repeated again this century. Well over half the costs are being defrayed by Germany, Japan and the Gulf states. How long will these countries tolerate American deficits which would imply an intensifying global recession and an increased burden on eastern Europe and the Third World?

Secondly, it may be difficult to sustain American hegemony politically, both for international and domestic reasons. Western Europe and Japan may find it politically difficult to finance and support Anglo-American interventionism in the future. There has been reluctance in western Europe, up to now, to support the Anglo-American position in the Gulf. This has prompted taunts from the British and American press about the unwillingness of European countries to shoulder their responsibilities. Indeed, in Britain, the short-lived post-Thatcher pro-Europeanism has been dissipated in a wave of Atlanticism and jingoism – talk of political union now seems to be off the agenda. But in other west European countries a different conclusion is being drawn, namely that European political union, perhaps excluding Britain, is all the more important so as to provide a check on American behaviour, to avoid a unipolar world. In particular, in Spain, Italy and also Germany, there is much discussion about a Mediterranean CSCE (Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, better known as the Helsinki process) a long-term institutionalised process of dialogue and negotiation about all the problems of the region, which is seen as an alternative to Hurd's Gulf Co-operation Council.

The behaviour of states depends on domestic political processes. The success of the cold war formula had everything to do with the way in which, at



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- Linda Smith
- Brenda Gilhooley
- Terri Carol
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- Martin Soan

**16mar**
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- Johnny Immaterial
- Owen O'Neil
- Mike Redmond
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least in the West, it commanded a broad bipartisan political consensus and incorporated the dominant parties of the Left. A North-South cold war formula is unlikely to command the same kind of broad domestic support, even though for the time being, the parties of the Left are supporting the war, at least in the United States and Western Europe. The new social movements of the 1970s and the 1980s emerged outside the formal party structures precisely because of the way in which the parties of the Left, which should have articulated new emancipatory concerns, were caught up in the compromises of the 1940s. Yet these movements undoubtedly have had a profound influence on Western political culture, especially in Germany and southern Europe where cold war attitudes are less deeply embedded and political processes have been more decentralised.

If and when the true extent of human, ecological and political costs of this war become public, the concerns of the new movements especially about peace, the environment, Third World poverty, gender and democracy, may well recapture the political agenda. The fact that we have bombed Iraq, a rather small Third World country, back into the 19th century or even earlier; the likelihood of continuing violence in the Middle East; the probable Lebanisation of Iraq and Kuwait; the increasing difficulty in finding a solution to the Palestinian problem; the increased threat of terrorism; the erosion of democracy – all these issues will stimulate opposition to a long-term North-South confrontation.

Political transitions are always chaotic. They are periods of political experimentation. The old order has collapsed. New ways of organising global relations are tried out. It is rather like competition in the market place, only the costs of failure are very much higher, involving violence and anarchy. The Soviet Union is disintegrating. The US is in decline. A European political union is perhaps in the making but it is doubtful whether a European political union would act as a superpower – the task of co-ordinating military efforts, of 'speaking with a single voice', may not even be worth attempting. A new *Pax Europa* or even *Pax Japanica* is difficult to envisage for all sorts of historical and geopolitical reasons.

It may be that, in this interdependent world, the very notion of great powers, in the traditional sense, cannot work. In the postwar period, international institutions have, after all, played a much greater role than previously, albeit dominated by the United States, and, to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union. It is difficult to see how any of the dramatic problems of the modern world thrown up by the exhaustion of Fordism – can be solved unless there is some sort of co-operation among major and lesser powers and some sort of political involvement of those groups and movements that articulate concern about these global problems. Unless this happens, if deep discontent is marginalised and excluded, if there is no access to global power structures, then the future looks bleak.

**'It will be very difficult to construct a new post-Fordist global order that has some chance of stability'**

But it will be very difficult to construct a new post-Fordist (as opposed to neo-Fordist) global order that has some chance of stability. It will necessitate a reform of political structures, especially international institutions like the United Nations or the IMF. And this is unlikely to happen unless there is a European political union and unless Europe and Japan play a more autonomous international role. It will necessitate a fundamental self-questioning and transformation of the dominant parties of the Left and a rearrangement of the domestic political spectrum.

For the next few years at least, the real messy world is likely to be unpredictable. Or rather, the most that one can predict is that the 1990s will be a period of yet more bumps and twists, swerves and U-turns, and unexpected developments. Whether and how we can emerge from these turbulent times, depends on the kind of political debates, actions, choices and alliances that are worked out during this period in the United States, Japan, the Middle East and especially here in Europe.●

*Mary Kaldor is a senior fellow of the Science Policy Research Unit at the University of Sussex*


## The Fire Brigades Union

General Secretary Ken Cameron

**Executive Council of Fire Brigades Union are extremely concerned at, and are opposed to the War in the Gulf.**

At a time when all progressive people in the world are looking forward to reaping the benefits of the peace dividend, a War based on the economy of the West is unnecessary and unacceptable.

There is no doubt that Saddam Hussein is an evil tyrant who has murdered, tortured and imprisoned any opposition to his regime. It is essential however, that the conditions be created for Iraq's withdrawal from its illegal occupation and a permanent resolution to the Gulf crisis.

**This should take the form of:-**

**(1)** An immediate cease fire.

**(2)** A buffer force consisting of a U.N. peace keeping force.

**(3)** The immediate setting up of a Conference representing all interested parties in the region to bring about a resolution to the Palestinian problem and a programme of disarmament on an equal basis throughout the region.

**INTERNATIONAL CITIZENS APPEAL FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

We are individuals, representatives of citizens groups and social movements. We are appalled by the list of crimes committed by Saddam Hussein throughout his bloody career. We are also deeply opposed to the violence of the Western response, the initiation of war before all alternative possibilities had been exhausted, the way in which the presentation of his war conceals the real effects upon civilian society and the manipulation of the United Nations on behalf of a small number of states, instead of an instrument of peace and security on behalf of the whole world community.

This war is polarising the world. It could mark the beginning of a new North-South confrontation that replaces the old East-West confrontation as a way of organising global relations. The war muffles the voices of humanity, of ordinary people who care about democracy, material well being, the protection of nature, and above all, human life.

WE CALL UPON ALL THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO JOIN US IN WORKING FOR THE FOLLOWING GOALS:

- An immediate ceasefire, retaining sanctions until Iraq withdraws from Kuwait.
- A Middle East peace conference which will address the full range of problems in the region and promote democracy, respect for human rights and reconciliation between the different communities.
- Reform of the United Nations so as to work towards greater representativeness, accountability and independence.

The Gulf war has shown that we cannot rely on Governments or International Institutions acting on their own. It is up to citizens working together to initiate a long term process of communication, mutual support and joint action. We invite all those who support this appeal to take part.

Signed: Noam Chomsky; Dan Ellsberg; Bishop of St. Andrews.; Committee for a Just Peace in the Middle East (Paris); Dieter Esch (Germany); Professor Akbar Ahmed; Campaign for Peace and Democracy USA; Mary Kaldor; EP and D Thompson; Dan Smith; Peter Crampton MEP; Janey Buchan MEP; Howard Clark; Associazione par la pace; Dr.Lynne Jones; Thomas Mastnak.

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## New World Order

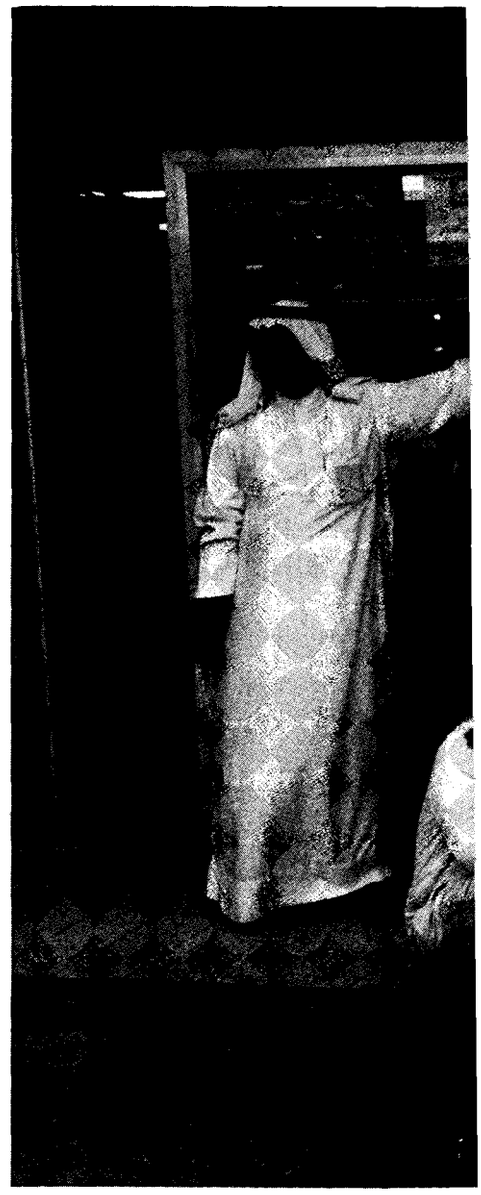
# Nations In The Thaw

**Neal Ascherson** discusses what the Gulf means for the New World Order

Before venturing to describe the new world order, or disorder, we have to clarify our sense of what the old order was like, and to value it. Essentially, we are talking about the cold war period, so brilliantly analysed by Mary Kaldor under the rubric of 'imaginary war', and as far as Europe and relations between the Soviet Union and the United States are concerned, I have little to add. But how should we evaluate the cold war's impact on the world outside Europe and North America – on the world which emerged from the second world war still largely in the condition of colonialism? Speaking the other day to the Catholic Institute for International Relations, Noam Chomsky argued that the impact was entirely negative: 'the cold war was a war primarily conducted against the Third World'. This seems to me to beg a hundred questions. For, if that departed order can be allowed any saving graces, it was in that area that they might be found. During the cold war, and to a great extent because of it, the colonial world achieved political independence.

War and cold war had some progressive effects within the colonial empires. At the economic level, prices of strategic raw materials soared and led to a rise in cash earnings: in Africa and Asia, large numbers of people acquired a certain purchasing power and savings. As these prices fluctuated, for example after the end of the Korean war boom, there was widespread unrest – often in resistance to well-meant price stabilisation funds set up by the colonial power – and out of this unrest arose movements which were to become nationalist parties and national liberation struggles. Secondly, the zone of tension between the Soviet Union and the West allowed national liberation movements to play one side off against the other: on the one hand, fear of 'communism' induced some colonial powers to make political concessions, while on the other the Soviet Union often provided political support, arms and training to these movements. Frelimo in Mozambique is one example of a movement which owes its success to cold war tensions.

But the old order has certainly collapsed. A bipolar world has become, through the implosion of the Soviet Union, a monopolar one. Nobody expected this: we can all remember the period of China-mania in the United States in the 1970s, and the anticipation of a 'tripolar world'. What became of that? The general expectation was, though, that bipolarism would endure but soften its nature. The whole Helsinki framework was established on the assumption that the West and the Soviet Union would retain their spheres of influence, especially in Europe, but that the application of their hegemonies would become milder and more tolerant, and that a series of negotiations and security agreements would steadily remove the possibility of East-West conflict. However, the cold war ended quite differently and unexpectedly, as one superpower withdrew from the contest and resigned its control over its zone of Europe. The United States is left as the only global superpower, in effect.



**Gold trading, Kuwait City**

**What does the war against Iraq tell us** about how the United States will exercise this unexpected freedom of action in the world? I think, by the way, that we can dismiss the idea of a new, competing superpower in the shape of the European Community of the future. As a huge block of population and economic strength, the Community will be formidable. Politically, however, I would foresee a 'Germanisation' of the EC, in the sense that the present German wish to avoid active external commitments and to concentrate on internal development will become the passive, defensive ethic of a Community which will attempt to build walls between itself and the turbulence of the outside world.

One view of the quality of a monopolar world, based on the Gulf crisis, would be optimistic. For the first time, the United Nations would be able to operate



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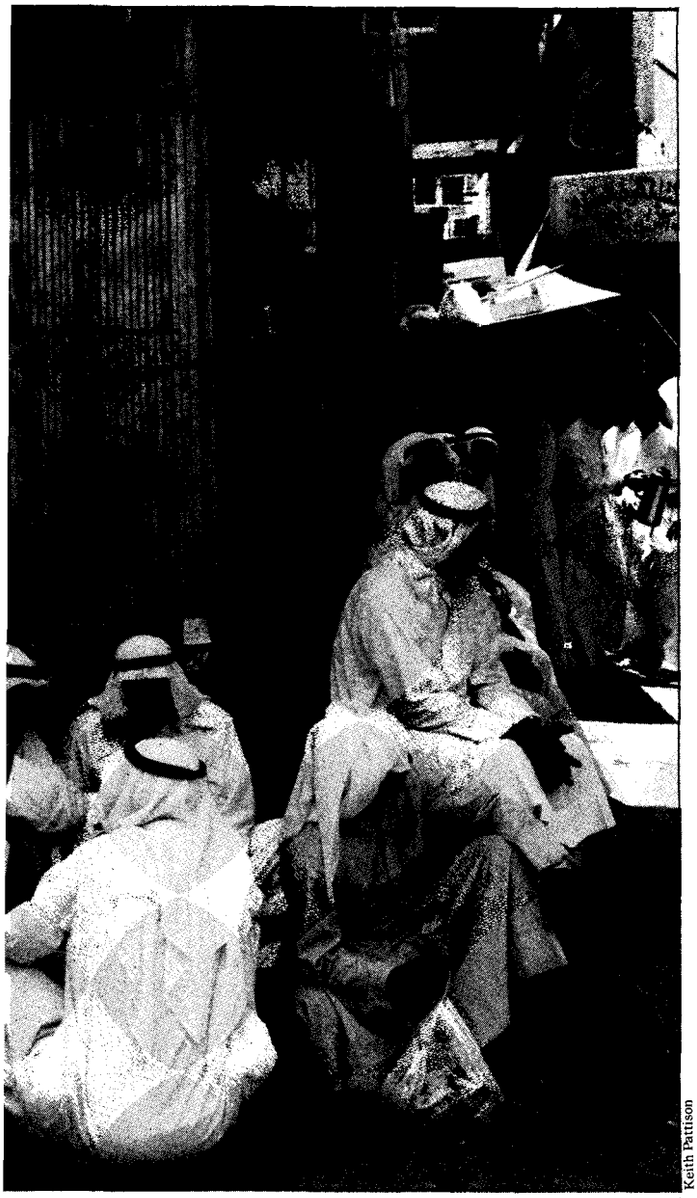

Keith Pattison

effectively as the guarantor of a law-bound international order, with the United States acting as its enforcement arm against aggressors. A new world order, indeed. A less hopeful view is that the United States will now be able to use force, if necessary, to apply its national interests throughout the world without fear of challenge, and to tow the United Nations obediently behind it. Backyards, incidentally, remain backyards. Few can seriously suppose that removal of the Soviet 'threat' in Latin America will lead to a fundamental revision of American policy and behaviour in that part of the world, whatever slogans will now be used to justify armed interventions and de-stabilisations. The feebleness of American reaction to the terrible events in the Baltic republics, moreover, relates as much to an unspoken compact about backyards as to concern to retain Soviet support for the anti-Saddam coalition.

But of course, this 'new order' may not be monopolar at all. There are new analyses – German and American – which suggest that we are now leaving such a world, not entering it: that the cold war, falsely represented as a balance of terror between two superpowers, was in reality the period of almost challenged American global dominations. The United States, in economic decline, will now retire into isolation leaving an increasingly chaotic 'world disorder' to its own devices. If this hypothesis is true then the enormous international coalition against Iraq, under American leadership, is the end of a epoch not the beginning of a new one.

In one view, the 'imaginary war' must continue, substituting new adversaries for the cold war enemy and in this sense the Gulf war would be compared to the Korean war – as the conflict which defines the new world order. But the cold war's neat polarities can hardly be carried on: it takes two to make a war, hot or cold. The 1980s suggested that new scarecrow-targets were being constructed to take the place of the Soviet Union. 'Fundamentalism', Islamic and otherwise, has been one of these. A more likely and lasting target, however, will be a demonised view of nationalism. If it is true, as I believe, that nationalism in its variety of forms remains the main political dynamic of the human race, then it is disconcerting that we hear little but wholesale condemnation of it. Nationalism was, is and will be: it is, as Tom Nairn put it, the Janus-face looking at once forward to liberation and progress and backward to reactionary and often mythical notions of the past; it is a force which should never be identified with the nation-state, a concept which nationalism has for a time inhabited, as a hermit crab inhabits a shell, but is evidently beginning to evacuate as the sovereign nation-state shows clear sign of obsolescence. How is it possible that the distinction between nation and state still escapes intelligent people on the British Left? To hear Scotland, for example, referred to as 'England' is a venerable howler which does at least represent the unequal nature of a relationship. But there is no excuse for those who confuse 'England' (nation) with 'Britain' (the multi-national state).

**'The West has an interest in the maintenance of nationalism, but only in its most backward form'**

**In the new world order, it may well be that** nationalism functions as the opposition to that order, the main source of resistance and challenge to large and more or less integrated blocks of power. Masked by the cold war, it has in practice fulfilled that function for a long time. But the matter is more complicated. There is a sense in which the existence of nationalism, or more accurately, of old-fashioned nation-states on the periphery, can be convenient to hegemonic power-blocs.

The 'Bantustan effect' is a system by which a developed and dominating core area surrounds itself by poor and backward 'sovereign' states. They are used as reserves of migrant labour and raw materials, to which the developed centre can export its unemployment when necessary: the importance of sovereignty is that a Bantustan carries political responsibility for handling the consequences of economic downturn, while the developed centre carries little or none. In South Africa, the satellite states had to be created. In the European Community, during the boom years of the 1960s and 1970s, they already existed in the Balkans and elsewhere, as they exist for the United States in Latin America.

In other words, the West has an interest in the maintenance of nationalism, but only in its most backward form: the sovereign nation-state, so long as it is powerless, dependent and relatively small. The engine of these systems is the 'labour pump', the device which South Africans used to call 'influx control', which ensures that migrant labour circulates and can be pumped out back to its Bantustan when no longer required.

But the pump leaks. Germany, which hoped to keep all its immigrant workforce as contract labour, has acquired a huge Turkish settled population. The same has happened in the white urban areas of South Africa, and in many regions of the United States. The project of exporting social responsibility across frontiers is rapidly breaking down, and immigration from the Third World, from eastern Europe and possibly the Soviet Union will be the major phenomenon of the next quarter-century and a central problem for any new world order.

In the longer term no effective barriers can be devised. Tighter immigration controls, visa restrictions, a shrinking of the right of asylum, cannot do more than reduce the rate of immigration. The idea that immigration can be discouraged by investment programmes paid for by the West and intended to make poor countries worth staying in cannot possibly work, given the inconceivable sums of money which would be required, except – maybe – in eastern Europe. Meanwhile, the attractions of North America and western Europe as a destination will increase. The price of a ticket, not by direct purchase, but as part of some loan - deal struck with small charter airlines or labour contractors, is beginning to be accessible to millions of small peasants or urban workers in Asia and Africa.

As this inflow increases – a population movement which can only be compared to the millennial westward movement of peoples into Europe which ended with the defeat of the Mongols – a final answer will be given to our absorbing little debate about European identity. The nation will certainly survive longer, as an enduring but Protean idea. But to visualise the nation stripped both of is territorial significance and of its ethnic assumptions is to ask too much of the imagination. We will have to wait and see.●

*Neal Ascherson is a columnist for the Independent On Sunday*



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## The Gulf Debate

# The Grand Illusion

Is this war really worth the cost? **Michael Gilsenan** takes issue with Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Fred Halliday

Two highly respected writers and commentators have recently supported the Gulf war project as a moral and political necessity: Hans Magnus Enzensberger, the poet and critic, and Fred Halliday, Professor of International Relations at the LSE and a noted authority on Middle Eastern politics. Their reflections pose a challenge and demand some response from those of us who, with the same unease and questioning which they both in quite different ways show, oppose the war.

Enzensberger (*The Guardian*, February 9) believes that to describe Saddam Hussein as Adolf Hitler 'is not merely journalistic license... but is actually deadly accurate'. Both were enemies of humanity. German historians and Middle East experts pursue 'illusions' if they imagine they can 'explain' either figure, for 'we are not confronted with a German or an Arab phenomenon, but with a human one'. Since 'no conceivable policy... can match such an enemy', millions of lives may have to be spent to deny Saddam 'his wish to unleash war'. And even if we succeed this time, the one who inherits his mantle may succeed the next. The cause is therefore somehow both utterly hopeless – for neither history nor the sacrifice of millions will help – and yet necessary. The tone is apocalyptic, but the apocalypse is coming whatever we do. We must act, but next time... Enzensberger invites us to a ghastly repetition of the *corsi e ricorsi* of humanity's blind tragedy.

Having excoriated the foolish historians and orientalists, however, Enzensberger nonetheless contradicts himself by rhetorical resort to a vague history. There is, he says, a social precondition for the emergence of such monsters: they cannot come into existence without the 'collectively humiliated' masses who follow, boundlessly adoring and blind, German or Iraqi alike. These are the masses who 'yearn for destruction'. In other words, there *are* historical conditions. Reflection as to what those conditions are, how they have arisen and are perpetuated, and what courses of political, cultural and economic action could be taken which might, just might, help to eradicate them are polemically excluded. Enzensberger's whole position, which seems to cry out for such examination, leads only to an overstrained nihilism.

Fred Halliday's approach and language are quite different (*The Guardian*, February 11). He criticises those against the war for the following reasons. First, there is no evidence whatever that Saddam could have been forced out; sanctions were simply not credible faced with such a despot. Second, that the war has the justification of driving back an aggressor state which refused all opportunities to retreat. And third, Saddam is not 'anti-imperialist', he is a murderous neo-fascist and should not be sentimentally indulged. Much of the liberal and left intelligentsia is either cultural relativist or feebly-mindedly post-modern agnostic. 'There are many who will conclude that, by a slim margin', the arguments for war are stronger, 'even if it is conducted by an unsavoury set of powerful states'.

The problem is that on his own terms 'many' may conclude quite the reverse, however much they share his view of the Iraqi regime. Halliday makes it admirably clear that talk of the 'international community' is fraudulent; 'Resolution 678 is a travesty of the UN'. He also sees that the Western-led coalition cannot ensure peace or a new order because it 'is not willing to address' the very factors such as dictatorship and maldistribution of wealth and power which led to war in the first place. There is no reason to believe (and here he is surely absolutely right) that there will be a new deal on Palestine which will seriously answer Palestinian claims. And, again no doubt rightly, we need no more have illusions about the motives of those leading the coalition than we did about Stalin, Churchill or Roosevelt – the second world war analogy.

If all this is true, it is quite unclear to me in what the 'slim margin' consists, and what price it is worth paying for the war we should, on balance, want.

There are surely three basic questions proponents as well as opponents of the war must consider: At what price, to whom? With what benefit, to whom? And, following on from the first two, how are the Arab societies in whose region the war is being fought affected?

**Even if it is true that Saddam is Hitler and** human evil incarnate, or, less dramatically, that the Iraqi regime is akin to fascism and must be destroyed, is the benefit simply self-evident – that international law will be asserted as the Kuwaitis regain their autonomy over the grave of their oppressor? And is any question of price and means (the two go together of course) simply obscene because no human, social, economic or political price is too high to pay for such a benefit?

Both the reasons for the war and the possible consequences have been mired in confusion from the beginning. As the conservative Senator Nunn said, in the fateful debate giving the president the powers he (and the pro-Israeli members of Congress so fervently) sought, Bush had not given him compelling reason for committing huge American forces to combat.

From the first days of August, the president has had trouble even articulating the war aims, as not a few American commentators pointed out before 'supporting our boys', prayer breakfasts, and a patriotism that may be more anxious than it yet seems, silenced them. He fluctuated between varying combinations of the defence of Saudi Arabia, the restoration of the Kuwaiti government and state integrity, the key strategic American interest in the Gulf, the oil supply, freedom and international law, and the much hinted-at wholesale destruction of a ruler and a Middle Eastern power recently supported but now suddenly discovered to be evil. The gentleman protests too much, methinks. Was this simple confusion, a plurality of aims growing day by day, Bush's notorious verbal debility? Or was there a wider, opportunistic yet deeply felt and unreflective vision of 'American leadership of the Free World', a vision intoxicating in its sweep but one which could not possibly be presented as compatible with the UN terms ostensibly legitimating the entire operation?

Consider the scene some time last August. The president is taking the key decision as to whether to increase his forces in the Gulf and to switch from a



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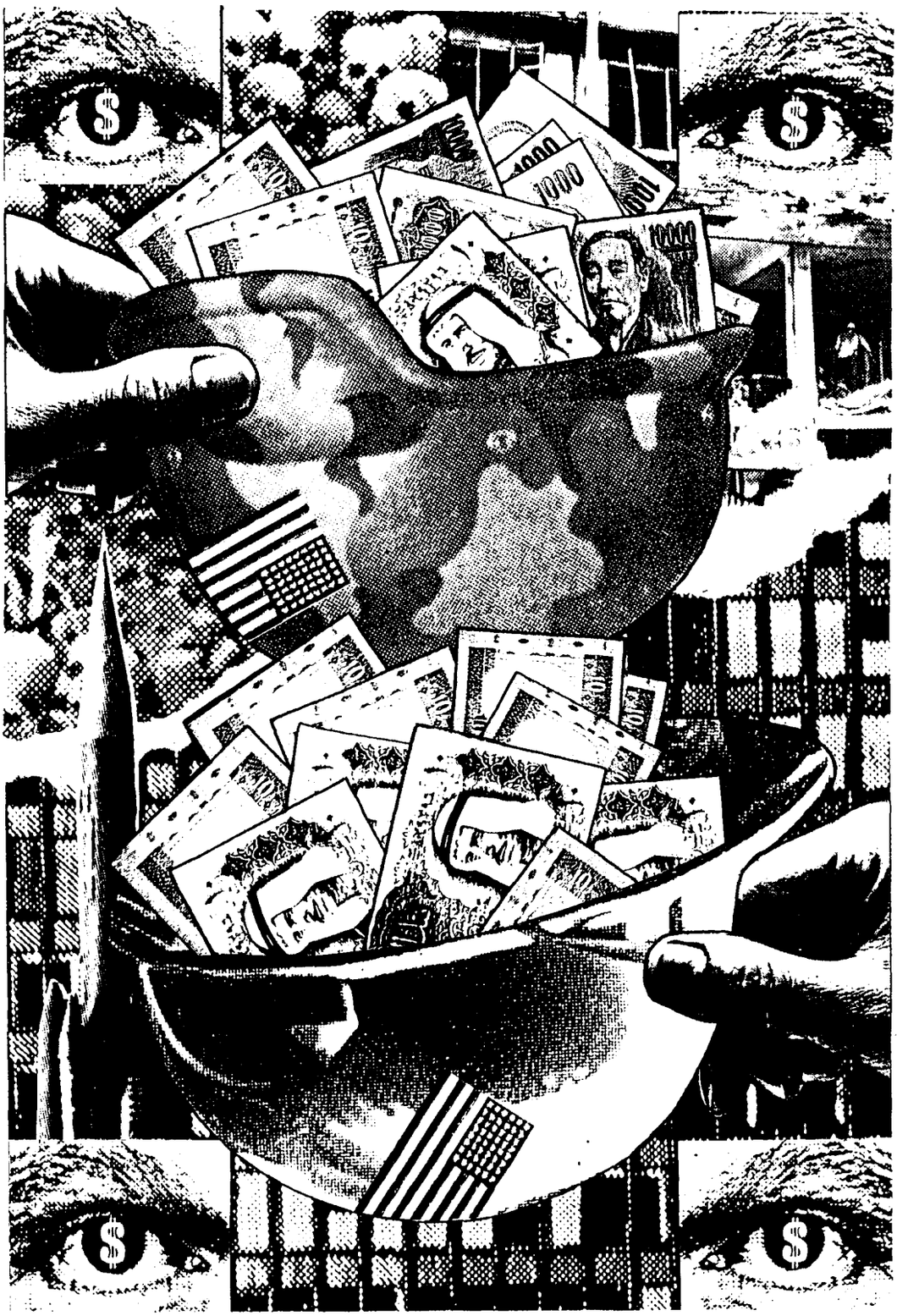

Illustration: Paul Bateman

defensive to an offensive posture. He knows that that switch will almost certainly mean war. Sanctions cannot possibly 'work' in the time he can allow for maintaining half a million men in combat readiness thousands of miles from home and for keeping his public opinion with him.

His enthusiastic chief of staff, Colin Powell, backed by his air force generals, is saying 'can do'. Technophilia is rampant and they have the weapons. They promise a quick and clean victory to a chief executive whose aides are strong at crisis management and poll analysis but who have no conception at all beyond those imperatives. The reward of that victory is not just 'the liberation of Kuwait'. It is the far greater one of effective American 'leadership' throughout the Middle East. Bush and Baker are cold war products. The 1950s language of good and evil forces, of worldwide pacts, bases and influence is their natural speech. The implications would have been clear, even self-evident.

Imagine those insistent voices: 'Here indeed is a window of opportunity Mr President, take it. Iran is weak. Egypt is ours. Syria hates Iraq. Turkey is in our pocket. The Gulf states will do exactly as they are told. The Saudis will have no choice. Israel will love it. We will control the flows of oil. The cold war is over and we have won. But we have a major domestic and international economic crisis; the Europeans and the Japanese are a competitive problem; even some Americans say we are no longer a world power. The Gulf will change that. The Brits will instantly assert their Atlantacist identity – Thatcher loves the idea anyhow and it will be a blow against the EC. They will do what they are told. The Europeans will come on board. Our wishes for a strong and interventionist Nato will be strengthened in this difficult period after the demise of the Warsaw pact. We can use the UN. And we can have bases and a permanent presence in the Middle East if we wish. Cut them off and kill them. Take it, Mr President.'

'War simplifies'. How attractive such a view would seem, dressed in more sophisticated and tough analytical clothes. A just cause and it promises later electoral success, provided everything is thrown at the enemy and his swift defeat is assured. That is not in doubt, because no one can actually imagine that 'we' are not going to 'win', though nobody ever analyses exactly what 'winning' would in fact mean out there in the real world of the Middle East, beyond the political and economic leverage it will give the United States.

Here is the cause of the plethora of explanations George Bush finds for the enterprise. What he *cannot* do, of course, is articulate clearly his true reasons of state, reasons which make perfect sense in an administration context and obey all the rules of *realpolitik*, including the rule that you should have God on your side. The destruction of the



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Ba'athist regime, the armed services, the manufacturing and industrial sectors, the infrastructure, the energy supply and the capacity for sustaining any normal level of social life in Iraq 'in order to restore the sovereignty of Kuwait' could go ahead.

Only two dimensions of cost seem to have received any systematic consideration early on – body bag numbers, and money.

If the air force chiefs could guarantee a quick kill and low casualties, both president and Pentagon could avoid the 'Vietnam nightmare', losing public support in a long drawn-out struggle far from home. They gave that guarantee.

**'Only two dimensions of cost seem to have received any systematic consideration early on – body bag numbers, and money'**

The problem of money was James Baker's responsibility. If he could get contributions from Japan, the Germans, and above all, the rich Arab states, then the war could more than pay for itself, as well as unambiguously showing the world whose new world order it would be. Baker could, and did. And fast. Giving a brilliant object lesson in the art of applying intense pressure, and with quite as much skill as the masterly early rounding-up in the UN, the secretary of state gathered the necessary billions. The American budget has not been harmed, and the Republicans have even been able to fight off 'peace dividend' talk while relaunching some of their cherished defence projects such as the immensely costly B–2 warplane.

The administration demonstrated the same speed and foresight in recognising that those who control the monopoly of the means of destruction can translate that into the monopoly of gain. They saw, long before anyone else, that there was another war to fight, what *Le Monde* called in a headline on the front page on February 8 *'la bataille des plans de paix'*. The paper's inside financial page heading was more precise: *'La victoire des industriels Americains'*. This war is against America's allies, Britain proudly at their head, for the vast economic contracts for the reconstruction of Kuwait (and no doubt, in time, of Baghdad itself). 'Vast' here means loose estimates of between $40 to $60 billion.

The 'slim margin' Fred Halliday suggests favours war is a very fat margin for Caterpillar, Bechtel, Fluor Daniel, Brown and Root, Foster Wheeler etc. Readers of the *Financial Times* will have noted reports on the forming of major and powerful consortia. They will also certainly have noticed the virtual exclusion of non-American business. The *Financial Times'* headline 'US and UK groups battle it out for contracts' on February 11 is the title of a report which notes that 'British engineers say US project managers traditionally prefer to operate with other US companies.' Quite.

The same paper on the same day also reported that American manufacturers were urging the Bush administration to 'ease the US domestic recession by taking more vigourous steps to promote exports'. The link is clear. We can only wish good luck to the chairmen or directors of Morgan Grenfell, Amec, John Brown Engineering, the Crown Agents, Department of Trade and Industry officials *et al*, who were trying desperately and belatedly to hustle the Kuwaiti government-in-exile in Taif, picking over the bones left by their voracious American allies.

Both Western countries make *explicit* use of their military contributions for political advantage in the no doubt ferocious bargaining over business. Bodies for business. Meanwhile, the air attacks continue.

The war therefore has tremendous financial as well as political rewards for America. The stakes in the arms trade are scarcely less hallucinatorily vast. No one, least of all James Baker or Douglas Hurd, is proposing any halt to the trade in so-called 'conventional' weapons amidst all the piety about nuclear, biological and chemical arms.

One of America's first reactions was to talk of the need the Gulf states would have for 'additional security'. The West and the Soviet Union have for years, with the enthusiastic help of local rulers made the entire region one of catastrophically high expenditure on arms. Britain has its 'sale of the century' with the Saudis, which used to be reported as worth some £20 billion over 20 years or so. Iraq is said to have been spending something like 25% of its GDP on arms, and others are not far behind. Now the West will have an almost monopoly position, providing the Chinese, Brazilians and local armaments industries do not take too much of the trade.

These policies, socially and economically crippling to Arab societies, will be enthusiastically continued in *another* arms race started in the name of the very regional 'stability' they will necessarily undermine. One day a specialist will be able to track the flows of capital associated with the whole episode. Tracing the dollars on an international basis has been an issue from day one. Israel presents a bill-cum-claim for $13 billion; the Turks have already been more than vigilant and need recompense; Egypt is already forgiven its $7 billion arms debt but needs more; Syria has had its funds unblocked by the EC; the US is getting its war subsidies; the Soviet Union is tied by its need for help; the air is thick with pay-offs and promises, massive promises, every one of which has its own complex politics contradicting most or all of the others.

To find out who is paying the price and who benefitting, *cherchez la monnaie*.

**What are the losses and benefits to 'the** Arabs' (a term which, depending on the user, frequently includes the Iranians, and sometimes the Turks)? In the arguments of those for and against the war, this must surely be a major concern of both sides. We know that Western armaments, engineering and construction industries gain. We know America's hoped-for political goals. We know oil-rich regimes purchase their safety and others a dubious new credibility in Western eyes. There *must* be some benefits to the Arab people themselves. Are there?

Some aspects are immediate and obvious. Kuwait has been shattered by the Iraqi regime. Iraq is being terribly battered. Jordan is crippled. The expulsion of 700,000 Yemenis from Saudi Arabia devastates the south Arabian economy. The Palestinians are hammered. The human cost is terrifying.

Yet in a curious way 'the Arabs' seem even less of a real presence than before. The abyss between us and them is even greater, whether or not they are 'on our side'. They have vanished into a sandstorm of media blitzes on Baghdad, the technologising of war, the false immediacy of 'real time', the pseudo-actuality of 'live from Amman-Riyadh-Dahran', and a demonised Saddam Hussein (to which mystification writing such as Enzensberger's unfortunately contributes).

'They' are more of an absence, and a puzzle, than ever. The wheeling and dealing of regimes is presumably not very mysterious. What is striking to me is the degree of bafflement expressed by many here (of any level of education and experience) over different Arab reactions to what, at the time of writing, is the invasion and occupation of Iraq by air and the bombing of a celebrated capital, Baghdad, as well as an important city, Basra.

How many 30-second sound bites have been spent treating outrage in the streets of some other Arab cities as inexplicable? Or apparent Iraqi solidarity in the face of aerial attack as unexpected or astonishing? How often has a peculiarly Arab sense of honour and face been evoked, as though American, British and French politics know nothing whatever of these strange notions?

What is bewildering about 'the Arabs' seems, in a paradoxical way, to be that this undifferentiated 'they' are in fact behaving as 'we' might expect them to behave if 'we' were in such a position. But because they are supposed to be utterly other and not-us – the barbarians outside the city – and because we the powerful *cannot* imagine the situation of being the victims of such a war, this normality is perceived as incomprehensible.

I have been asked a thousand times for the deep cultural explanation of all sorts of profound differences between 'us and them' in the last few months. Now, as that dubious creature, a Middle Eastern specialist (*pace* Enzensberger), I have virtually a vested interest in talking about historical and sociological specificities. They certainly exist. But on nearly all occasions the answers have actually seemed to me *not* to require any special insight into unique cultural peculiarities. Rather, they appear to demand a relatively straightforward attempt at a political reading of the situation rather than the citing of some supposed mental or



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cultural condition.

'Saddam Hussein' in 'Baghdad', attacked by the world's greatest power and its allies, becomes a vessel into which any amount of grievances, frustrations and wretchedness can be poured. Denied political and civil space in most Arab society by undemocratic regimes of various kinds, many people make of such an image a confused but powerful instrument of criticism of their own rulers, never mind the powers which they associate with colonial history and contemporary world dominance. Is that incomprehensible, even when we, and many Arabs when the sounds of war are not deafening them, recognise the vileness of his regime and the total horror of the invasion and occupation of Kuwait?

Informed in majestic neo-colonial language and with disingenuous grace by the British foreign secretary that they 'have a part to play' in the settlement of their own affairs, is a sense of humiliation and a wintry smile from those who remember other foreign secretaries and other assurances so difficult to grasp? Is it not in fact much more extraordinary that our minister appears to find such a statement positively generous and reassuring and has no sense of its presumption? The Syrian foreign minister who, after meeting Douglas Hurd, evoked the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 in which the British and the French secretly carved up the Middle East between them (later using the League of Nations to give them the so-called Mandates as a cover), was not making some arcane and irrelevant allusion. A minimum of historical awareness and a willingness to confront our own past is what is needed to teach us that, quite as much as knowledge of 'Arab culture'.

We have no idea of how this will all end; or rather, how it will continue in its effects over several decades and with any number of unintended consequences. The complex processes set in train with such a blithe disregard of consequence and so little consideration of effect, will of course work their way out in many dimensions. The very fact that they are so unknown and cost so high in human lives seems to me to be a point against the arguments of Enzensberger and Halliday. There is no proportionality between crime, real and appalling crime, and punishment any more. The actual agenda now established by the Americans and their subsidiaries, does *not* direct itself to the issues either Enzensberger or Halliday identify. The price and the benefit are not right and just; even in the deeply disturbed and complex world of our calculations we can see that.

At this stage, almost overwhelmed by the deluge of war, there is perhaps nothing to say that is not banal. It does seem likely to me that a North-South divide will be greatly deepened; that the still weak but nonetheless unmistakable pressures towards democratisation in some of the Arab societies will be lost, not least because the war and the allies will put such a premium on harsh social and political controls in what many will see as potentially revolutionary situations. And I doubt that this time round Arab public opinion will separate the action of Western governments so clearly from Western peoples as they seemed able to do after Suez.

**'Nobody ever analyses exactly what 'winning' would in fact mean in the real world of the Middle East'**

What would the effects of sanctions have been? The question has become practically irrelevant, but not politically or morally so. I am convinced that it was the course to follow. In British terms, Heath and Healey are right. With all its uncertainties and lack of guarantees, such a policy had many practical chances of being effective against Iraq's economy and of causing political and economic isolation. That in turn might have given wider diplomatic and political options a chance. In that space, a realistic attempt to produce serious Israeli-Arab negotiations could have at least begun the process of denying figures such as Saddam their greatest propaganda card. And the West *might* have begun to re-evaluate its use of such monsters.

Who knows? But I am as sure as I can be that the uncertainties and multiple complexities, the appalling human and social cost, and what is in my view the cynicism of this war, will demand a far higher price for a far more dangerous future.●

*Michael Gilsenan is professor of contemporary Arab studies at Oxford University*


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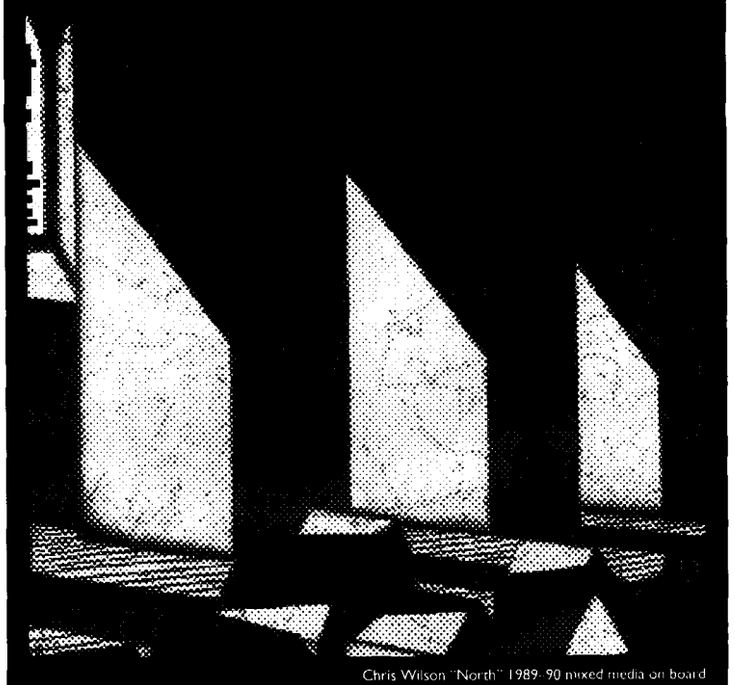

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## Arab Nationalism

# The New Saladin

Saddam Hussein draws for his support on a number of different causes – Iraq, united Arab nationalism and Islam. *Robert Solé* talks to **Maxime Rodinson** about the ideological confusions of the Gulf conflict

**'It is true that the confusion is at its greatest now, even among the Arabs themselves'**

**Maxime Rodinson is an academic, sociologist and leading authority on the Arab world. He is the author of *Israel And The Arab Refusal.***

**Do you think that Saddam Hussein's designs upon Kuwait are wholly unjustified?**
A lot of nonsense is spoken about this every day. There is talk of Iraq's eternal right to Kuwait, and of Kuwait as an integral part of Iraq. There is talk of either scrapping or maintaining the borders inherited from the era of colonisation. Yet neither Iraq nor Kuwait were ever really colonies. Besides, it was not until 1921 that the country Iraq was defined and created by the British in the context of the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.

**What happened after the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire?**
An unratified Anglo-Ottoman accord of 1913 recognised the independence of Kuwait within the theoretical framework of the Ottoman Empire. The war brought this link to an end. By 1923, the rise of the Saudi Kingdom presented a new threat to stability, and so a convention fixed the border between the emirate of Kuwait and Iraq, which had just been created under a British mandate.

When in 1961 an Anglo-Kuwaiti accord dating back to 1899 expired, Kuwait became independent. Iraq (itself fully independent since 1932, and rid of the monarchy with its London connections since 1958) claimed that it owned Kuwait. Britain, Nasser's Egypt and the Arab League sent troops to defend its independence and Iraq withdrew. Kuwait was admitted to the Arab League and to the United Nations.

**How do you explain Saddam Hussein's progression from his early years in a secular party, the Ba'ath, to his pose today as a leader of Islam?**
From what we know of him, Saddam does not seem to be driven primarily by any ideology. You cannot deny *a priori* that he had some sort of sincere ideological outlook in his formative years. However, his desire for power soon took precedence over any other consideration. Napoleon Bonaparte, remember, was also once a committed Jacobin and follower of Robespierre. While a member of the Ba'ath Party, Saddam manoeuvred within it to gain control, and had no qualms about his methods. He formed a united clan, largely through family ties amongst army officers, and used this clan for his own purposes. But he was always ready to eliminate any recalcitrant members.

**This is in marked contrast to the progress of Nasser's career...**
Saddam does not feel the same filial affection for Nasser as, for example, Gadaffi. They are certainly both motivated by the same united Arab nationalism, as well as a move towards social reorganisation described as socialist. Nevertheless, Saddam has also been inspired by the historical rivalry between the Ba'ath and the pro-Nasser movement. Nasser can be credited with a sincere dedication to his ideals, despite any lapses involved in the seizure of power. There doesn't seem to be much of that in the character of the Iraqi leader.

**Has the secular nature of the Ba'ath Party been exaggerated?**
The ideological muddle forged with passionate lyricism by Michel A'flaq was, in the final analysis, inspired by the romanticism of Herder and other German thinkers. It is essentially secular in the sense that it wishes to group together the Arabs without taking into account the differences between communities. In A'flaq's view, nationalism was to be the sole bond.

**On top of Arab nationalism, hasn't Saddam Hussein also made use of Iraqi nationalism?**
Saddam draws together any useful ideologies, favourable to his own ambitions and personal glory. He sees himself as the successor both to the Assyrian and Babylonian monarchies, conquerors of the Middle East, and to Saladin, who became leader of a vast Syro-Palestino-Egyptian Empire, and gained a prodigious reputation for avenging Islam when he recaptured Jerusalem from the Frankish crusaders in 1187.

**Aside from the personal ambitions of Saddam Hussein, is there a growing confusion between the terms 'Arab' and 'Muslim'?**
This confusion has existed for centuries in Europe, notably in France. Today, Muslims are classed as Arabs, while at the end of the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the modern period, they were classed as Turks. It is true that the confusion is at its greatest now, even amongst the Arabs themselves. They tend to consider themselves as the true bearers of Islam, forgetting that four out of every five Muslims are not Arabs.

**In this context, do you think that the war in the Gulf might appear as a war of religion?**
In the religious wars of the past, each side tried to convince the other of the truth of its own religion. Fighting was even stopped to allow intellectual debate. No such thing occurs today, whether in Ireland or Lebanon. These are not wars of religion but conflicts between communities which have different religions; no side tries to convert the other.

**What about the rise in Islam we are witnessing?**
In the Muslim world over the last two centuries, Western recipes have been used for government and society. These secular utopias have failed. However, since man is unable to do without utopias, now the hour of religious utopias is at hand.

**As someone who, long before the present crisis, was once a militant communist, what is your reaction to these utopias and to the general confusion?**
I would say, 'Exploited and humiliated brothers of the West, did we really gain anything by placing the struggle against our just grievances in the hands of a merciless and megalomaniac Georgian with a moustache?' In the same manner, I would also say, 'Arab brothers, do you believe that you will make progress in the fight for your cause by helping to realise the plans, unknown to us all, of a megalomaniac and ruthless Babylonian with a moustache?' ●

*This interview is reprinted from Le Monde. Translation by Nigel Saint.*



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## Future Of The Middle East

# Turbulent Peace

The Gulf crisis was well into the war phase before much thought was given to the postwar Middle East settlement. **George Joffe** views whatever might emerge with pessimism

Now we know what the political masters of the multinational force in the Gulf intend to do with the Middle East, once the war with Iraq is over and the Saddam Hussein regime, along with its creator, has been eliminated. The details are still missing, but the main outlines are becoming clear as United States and European statesmen make their pronouncements and tour the capitals of their Middle Eastern allies in an atmosphere of ever greater confidence. In effect, Washington seems to want to retain a cohesive 'Western' view, in which the United States and Europe are seen to act in concert, even though the cold war has formally ended. Although there is no doubt that this view is supported in London – which tends to see the West in terms of an Anglo-Saxon axis and the 'special relationship' between Britain and the United States – France has reservations and it is clearly not shared by southern European nations. As Hurd discovered to his discomfort in early February, Anglo-American ideas over future Middle East security arrangements are considered too timid in Rome, where the preferred Italo-Spanish option is a Mediterranean version of the CSCE (Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe).

The Anglo-American axis might also face problems from the Soviet Union, despite Gorbachev's massive domestic difficulties. Soviet support for UN Security Council Resolution 679 was, after all, predicated on the assumption of Soviet participation in future Middle East security arrangements. Not only does Moscow have a long-standing relationship with Baghdad, but the Middle East is uncomfortably close to its Muslim southern republics. Unfortunately, cold war traditions appeared to die hard and neither Douglas Hurd nor James Baker seem to have 'factored in' a Soviet component for their proposals.

The general lines of what is proposed by Britain and the United States now seem fairly clear. Hurd argues that the Arab world itself must create this new system (presumably under Western tutelage) and a conference to this effect between eight of the nine partners in the alliance (Morocco being the sole absentee) occurred in Cairo in mid-February. There are basically four elements to the proposal:

1. There is to be a new security system, based on the Arab world in one form or another. Hurd's preferred option appears to be based on the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) – the organisation created in 1981 in order to provide the Gulf with a collective security system designed to obviate the necessity for Iraqi, Iranian or even Western participation and involving Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia – but this time under explicit Saudi leadership. The military component would be provided by Egypt, or even Syria, with the GCC meeting the costs. Western air and naval forces would maintain an 'over-the-horizon' presence, although arms dumps and even some aircraft might be based in forward areas, such as Kuwait.

2. There is also to be an initiative towards regional disarmament and towards limiting future arms supplies to the region. Disarmament would involve the removal of nuclear, bacteriological and chemical weapons, while arms supply controls would exclude 'non-conventional' arms.

3. Attempts are to be made to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute, together with the Palestinian issue. According to comments made by Hurd, this might not necessarily involve the PLO as a negotiating partner and Israel would not be forced to attend a peace conference or to accept an independent Palestinian state as part of any ultimate solution.

4. Finally, arrangements are to be created to redistribute wealth in the region. This would involve significant funds being made available by the GCC states, in addition to the military costs they will have to bear. Western help – from Japan and Germany – might also be involved.

Baker also proposed that there should be a regional development bank, rather like the new BERD which is to stimulate capitalist reconstruction in Eastern Europe, to contribute towards the fourth objective. The European Community, for its part, wants to extend its existing aid agreements to cover Libya, Iran and even a postwar Iraq. In effect, these new arrangements are both to pay for the reconstruction of Iraq and Kuwait after the war and to provide a mechanism to redistribute Gulf oil wealth throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

It all sounds very optimistic. It even seems to justify the way in which the United Nations has been hijacked by the United States and Britain to legitimise their decision to eliminate the Saddam Hussein regime. It is certainly designed to excuse the physical destruction of Iraq – an inevitable consequence of the type of war that the allies in the multinational force have decided to fight. The problem is, however, that all these proposals are, as one commentator on Baker's testimony pointed out, '... high on moral content, but low on detail'. In any case, many Western states have serious reservations about them, preferring instead arrangements which actually link the Middle East and Europe together and which will involve real changes in Western attitudes towards regional problems. Furthermore, despite Hurd's fervent belief that security arrangements must originate from within the Arab world itself, his own hints of what they should be (which no Arab leader is likely to ignore) seem to run counter to the practical realities of the world in which they are to be applied.

**One reason for this is that the underlying** causes for the West's concern over the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and for Washington's original involvement have little to do with the security system it now wishes to see created. There seem to have been two principal concerns. The first was Western (namely, the OECD states) dependence on oil imports from the Gulf. The Middle East – in effect, the Gulf – contains 66.3% of the world's oil reserves. The US imports 45% of the oil it consumes, 26% of it from the Gulf. Western Europe imports 67% of the oil it consumes, 49% of it from the Gulf. Kuwait and Iraq together contain 29% of the Gulf's oil reserves and, up to 1990, were producing 27% of the Gulf's total output.

Western policy-makers, particularly those in Washington and London, were not so concerned with the question of controlling access to the Gulf's oil reserves. After all, oil has little value if it cannot be produced and sold. What was important, however, was the danger that an unpredictable politician, poten-



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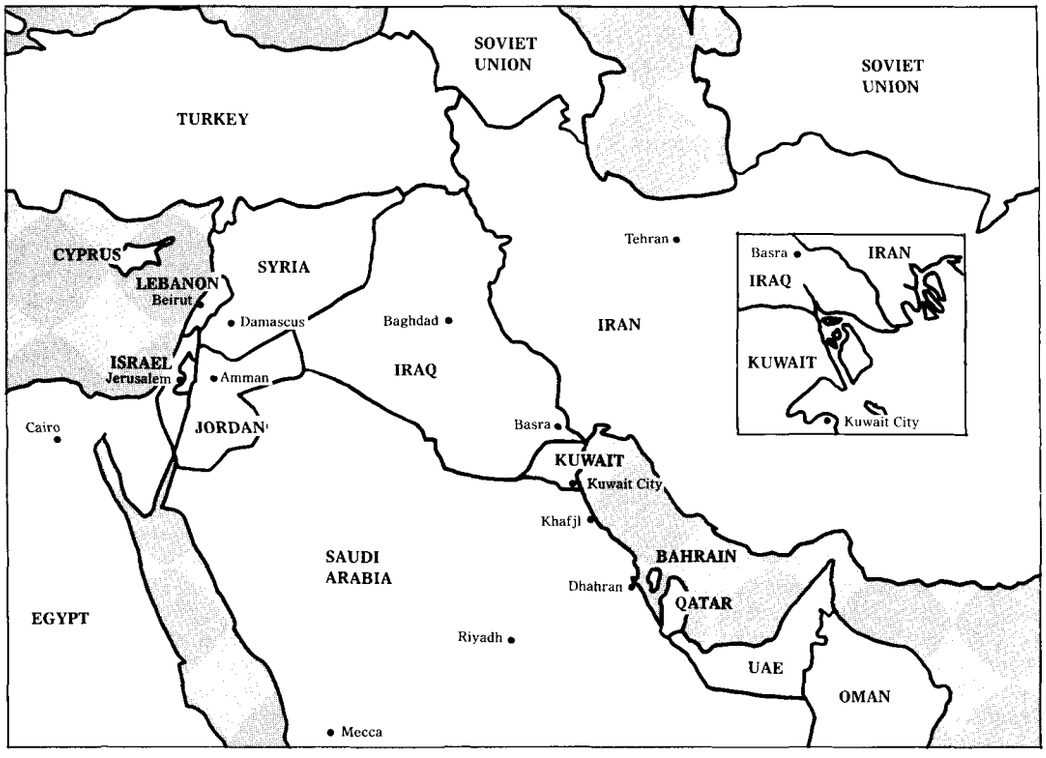


tially hostile to Western interests, might well have manipulated oil flows in order to control crude oil prices. Such control over world oil prices could have had very unpleasant effects on the economies of the developed world, turning the danger of global or regional recession into a chronic threat. The West, therefore, had an acute interest in ensuring stability of oil supply and making sure that leaders such as Saddam Hussein could not affect it.

In fact, the second objective of the US-led intervention in the crisis has turned out to be the real concern. This was to establish the new pattern of global authority in the post-cold war world – under the aegis of the United States, with or without the cloak of United Nations sanction. It was the culmination of the US strategic conceptualisation which had begun in 1981, as President Reagan came to power. It had found its first practical test in United States hostility towards Libya in 1986 and was developed further during the United States intervention in the maritime conflict in the Gulf on behalf of Kuwait in 1987. Its first post-cold war opportunity had been President Bush's occupation of Panama in December 1989. It was a vision which had been enthusiastically supported by the Thatcher government in London.

In this context, the current post-war peace proposals now being advanced in Western capitals are merely the icing on the global security cake. The basic concern has been to demonstrate that regimes, such as that in Iraq, can no longer threaten this new dispensation of global power. The new system is to be sustained by a single super-power which, even if officially bankrupt, can still call on the financial resources of its wealthy clients and allies to support its global security activities. It is, in effect, a restatement of the neo-imperialist security vision of the 1950s. Rather than accepting the idea of a new world order based on the community of nations as expressed through the United Nations, security is to be expressed through a series of Western-dominated collective security structures. As with Nato, the interlocking lynchpins between these new structures will be provided by the participation or the patronage of the United States and its allies.

**'Israel is to become the key to Middle East security once again because of the unreliability of the Arab states'**

Interestingly enough, the United States is very loath to give up Nato, despite the end of the cold war, arguing instead that Nato can have an 'out-of-area' role, including the Mediterranean and the Middle East. It is a reluctance that already had very interesting echoes for the Middle East, even before the current crisis broke out. Furthermore, United States Secretary of State James Baker's first proposal for the postwar organisation of Gulf security was the 'Gulfo' concept. This was to be a regional security organisation based on the GCC, together with a Western military input or participation.

In the case of the Middle East, however, Hurd's proposed new system will almost certainly be unworkable because it suffers from a set of internal contradictions. It also does not correspond to the fundamental assumptions on which the new security systems should be based, for essential elements which would guarantee security are apparently to be excluded. It is based on a selected group of Arab states – although the non-Arab states in the region are potentially the most powerful and have always displayed a powerful awareness of their regional role. It also ignores the way in which Western states, particularly the United States, have for years ignored the real causes of security and stability problems in the Middle East – the Arab-Israeli dispute, together with the Palestinian issue, and the illegitimacy of the vast majority of Arab regimes which is the real cause of the repression they practice to ensure their survival.

**Behind Hurd's selection of a specific group** of Arab states is the assumption that the Arab world as a whole can be ignored, since only part of it has any role to play in security in future. That group is not only the group which has supported the US-led intervention against Iraq, it is also the group which effectively controls Gulf oil production and Opec. It has already demonstrated its willingness to serve Western objectives by more than compensating for oil production lost as a result of the UN embargo on exports from Iraq and Kuwait – with the result that international oil prices despite the war remain low and are predicted to fall to new lows of between $11 and $15 per barrel after the war.

The view that the attitudes of Arab states are irrelevant to future security arrangements unless they coincide with Western prejudice – has been reinforced by the destruction of the Arab League early last August. This was the real consequence of the tumultuous meetings at which Saudi Arabia and Egypt, at US urging, steamrollered through motions to support military participation in the US-led force in Saudi Arabia. The Arab world has now broken up into three separate components and it is difficult to see how they can be reassembled. This must have serious implications for the viability of Hurd's ideas, for the resulting tensions between states are bound to threaten their long-term security.

### The Arab security core

The Arabian peninsula, unified within the GCC and its support for the multinational force and the core for the proposed new security arrangements, now confronts a fragmented Levant and an increasingly hostile North Africa. Syria and Egypt have supported the multinational force. Syria's decision results from $2 billion worth of Saudi aid and guarantees of a free hand in Lebanon, as well as because of its traditional enmity towards Iraq. Egypt has joined in because of its dependence on United States aid and good will and because of its distaste for Iraq's bid for Arab leadership. Jordan has consistently opposed the military option, despite its reluctant support for sanctions against Iraq.

Hurd's new security system is to be based on the GCC, which will provide financial support under Saudi leadership, with Egyptian or Syrian military muscle. Yet, in the eyes of most Arabs, Saudi Arabia has disqualified itself from leadership of the fragmented Arab world precisely because of its alliance with the United States. Furthermore, if the GCC is to provide the financial support for security, it is difficult to



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see how it could do the same for 'reconstruction and redistribution', as suggested by Baker – massive though oil revenues may be, they do have limits.

In addition, Egypt and Syria seem most uncertain partners because of their own internal political problems. Yet, Hurd's suggestions implicitly assume that both states are stable political entities – which they are not. Instead, the governments of both – like all other governments in the Middle East – survive to a greater or lesser degree by simple repression. Syria has massive internal problems and most observers consider that apparent domestic calm has been bought only at the cost of severe repression of popular opposition to the country's participation in the war.

Egypt, despite the enthusiasm of its government for the role proposed for it, is hardly a secure military partner. Even though it has been able to obtain relief for $16 billion-worth of foreign debt as a result of its participation in the multinational force, it still has $35 billion of remaining debt to contend with and an annual revenue shortfall of around $7 billion caused by the conflict. This consists of lost remittances, tourist earnings and Suez Canal income, together with massive resettlement costs for returning migrant workers. It also has to face the threat of potential domestic unrest as the IMF structural economic reform programme it has adopted begins to bite. There is also the growing opposition to the war, which will be fuelled by casualties and by worsening domestic economic conditions.

### The role of non-Arab powers

In any case, even the GCC itself recognises that such a defence structure will be inadequate – at least as far as the Gulf is concerned. At the annual GCC head-of-state summit in Dona at the end of December it was agreed (despite Saudi misgivings) that any new security system for the Gulf would have to involve Iran. Yet the West still seems determined to exclude Iran from regional security, no doubt because of United States irritation with the humiliation visited upon it during the Gulf war by the Islamic republic. Equally, the rhetoric from Tehran, which still persists in identifying the United States as the Great Satan, despite President Rafsanjani's calls for Iraq to leave Kuwait, seems bound to sustain United States hostility.

Iran, however, is one of the most populous states in the Middle East, and occupies a dominant role in the Gulf region. It cannot be excluded from regional security arrangements if stability is to be achieved in oil flows from Gulf oil producers. Western strategists will have to redraw their plans to include Iran as a key component in a new security structure, however great Saudi resistance or United States distaste to this may be. Western failure to respond to this will only intensify the power of the radicals in Tehran and worsen the prospects of security in the Gulf if Iran is excluded from what it sees as its rightful place.

The same is not so true of the West's other non-Arab ally, Turkey, which some have seen as a potential guardian of the Levant. President Ozal's sudden interest in supporting the objectives of the multinational force (against growing domestic opposition) reflects much more parochial concerns. Turkey's primary interest is in gaining access to the European Community and Ankara believes that support for the West in the Gulf will hasten the day when Brussels will have to admit, albeit reluctantly, its first Muslim partner. There are also the longstanding Turkish objectives of resolving the Cyprus conflict to its advantage and of forcing the United States to reduce military support for its regional adversary, Greece.

There is certainly a continuing interest in Ankara in irredentist Turkish claims on Kirkuk and Mosul in northern Iraq, which are in the homeland of Iraq's 5m Kurds and which are also the centre of Iraq's northern oil fields. Interestingly enough in this connection, the Turkish government has suddenly permitted the use of Kurdish language, thereby reversing it decades-long refusal to recognise the existence of its own 11m-strong Kurdish minority. Should Iraq fall apart, Turkey may well consider annexing the Kurdish north, along with its valuable oil.

Iran would strongly oppose such a move, despite its concerns over the Shi'a south of Iraq, in part because of its anxieties over its own minorities and in part because of the danger of the consequent 'Lebanonisation' of Iraq, with the threat of continued Western involvement. Tehran might well, in such circumstances, support a rump Iraqi state against Turkey – even with Saddam Hussein still in charge. The West, therefore, must do all it can to ensure that Turkey's interests are diverted northwards and that a unitary Iraqi state survives the war. In effect, however, it cannot continue to exclude non-Arab states from the security arrangements it hopes to create.

### The question of Israel

This is particularly true of the future role and status of Israel. However, discussions on this issue seem to be dominated by an inherent unrealism. On the one hand, hints are provided that the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian issue will be resolved as part of any new security system. On the other, Israel has been assured by Washington that its neutrality in the conflict will be rewarded afterwards. Although the Bush administration has already earned a reputation as the most hostile United States administration towards zionist aspirations (as expressed in the Likud government of Yitzak Shamir in Jerusalem), the latter assurances must worry Arab states involved in the West's new plans. It is no doubt for this reason that the Syrian foreign minister, Farouk al-Shara, has gone out of his way to emphasise that continued Syrian support depends on the way in which the West responds to what Syria perceives to be the fundamental problem of Middle Eastern security – the Arab-Israeli dispute and the Palestinian issue.

**'Until Arab regimes become acceptable to the populations over which they rule they will continue to be unstable, repressive and no basis for effective collective security'**

However, despite all the rhetoric, the West, particularly the US, has little intrinsic interest in resolutions that would be acceptable to the Arab world – which it, in any case, persists in considering as virtually irrelevant to future security arrangements. Israel is, in the last resort, the basic guarantor of Western interests in the region, not least because its own national interest and those of the West largely coincide. Israel will not be forced to attend a Middle East peace conference over the Palestinian issue after the war is over if it does not want to – and it certainly does not.

Western politicians have repeatedly made it clear that the PLO is unlikely to be allowed to represent Palestinian interests because of its supposed support for the Saddam Hussein regime. New Palestinian representatives must be found, even though the PLO still enjoys overwhelming majority support. Presumably Hurd and Baker do not mean by this that Hamas, the Gaza-based fundamentalist movement dedicated to destroying Israel (unlike the PLO), should take up the official torch of Palestinian independence!

The president of the European Community has even argued that Israel's objections to a peace conference could be accommodated by accepting the alternative of bilateral negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbours. That proposal is also the preferred option of Israel's Likud coalition government – as Levy, the Israeli foreign minister, made clear on a recent visit to Washington. The Palestinians, meanwhile, are to be fobbed off with a degree of internal autonomy – as was proposed in the original Camp David agreements of 1978, brokered by Jimmy Carter, between Israeli premier Menachim Begin and the Egyptian president, Anwar Sadat. The only alternative would be that Jordan disintegrates under the pressure of military action and popular hostility towards the war. Then the 'transfer' of the Palestinian population out of the Occupied Territories into what remains of Jordan – the option preferred by Ariel Sharon and the Modelet Party – could become a reality, thus leaving plenty of space to the expected 1m refugees from the USSR.

In effect, the reality will be that Israel is to become the key to Middle Eastern security once again because of the unreliability of Arab states, particularly in the Levant. It is notable that no Western politician has yet proposed that Israeli nuclear weapons should be included in the regional disarmament negotiations that will neuter the military power of states such as Syria and Iran and ensure that Iraq cannot become a new military phoenix. Instead,



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# Saddam's Support

Luigi Baldelli/Select

Historians will doubtless record how it was that, in August 1990, Western intervention in the Gulf region started a process which turned Saddam Hussein from a dictator universally feared and hated by the Arabs into a hero and symbol of Arab courage and defiance, to be venerated for generations to come. His increasing tide of support from the populations of the Arab and wider Muslim world has puzzled Western observers, some of whom had actually believed that the Arabs might be only too glad to be rid of him with Western help.

The massive demonstrations against the war in several Arab and Muslim countries since the war started should have dispelled this illusion. North Africa has been in the forefront of these protests. On January 18, 400,000 people demonstrated in Algiers. On January 25 Moroccan trade unions held a 24-hour general strike in support of Iraq with official sanction, despite the riots that had taken place on the occasion of a previous strike last December. On February 3, some 300,000 people marched through the Moroccan capital, Rabat, in the biggest demonstration there since independence in 1956. Three quarters of a million people – one quarter of the entire population of Colonel Gadaffi's Jamahiriyah – demonstrated in Tripoli on January 18 and there have been mass demonstrations in support of Iraq in Tunis ever since late August last year.

There have been similar events in the Middle East as well. In Jordan, there have been repeated anti-war and pro-Saddam demonstrations. Many Jordanians have also volunteered to fight for Iraq. In Syria, special forces were moved into every major town soon after the onset of war with orders to shoot to prevent further demonstrations after a few spontaneous outbursts of public protest occurred in the east of the country. Even in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, there have been anti-war sermons in mosques, and growing anti-war sentiment in the Egyptian opposition press.

This wave of opposition has been echoed in Muslim and Third World countries. The Pakistani capital was recently placed under daily curfew because of the danger of pro-Iraqi riots. India's 100m Muslim population has reacted with widespread demonstrations in support of Saddam Hussein, and there have been similar large-scale protests in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Bangladesh.

Passive popular support for Iraq has been expressed in Africa and throughout Latin America. In Nigeria, Saddam Hussein was voted the most popular man of 1990. In Nicaragua, it is reported that many male babies born since the beginning of this year have been named either Saddam or Hussein. It may seem trivial, but it demonstrates the depth of feeling released by the events in the Middle East.

The most striking support for Saddam Hussein has probably come from the Palestinian population of the Israeli-occupied territories. Demonstrators have pledged themselves to fight alongside Iraq, and, despite a ferocious 22-hour curfew imposed on them by Israel since January 17, many Palestinians were so elated by Iraqi Scud attacks on Israel that they climbed onto their roof tops to cheer as the Iraqi missiles whizzed past. The extent of this popular support is all the more remarkable, given the devastating economic and political damage inflicted on Palestinians as a result of the Gulf crisis.

The fact that there are Arabs in the anti-Iraq coalition is often adduced by supporters of that coalition as evidence of Arab approval of the war. That, however, is to ignore the reality of Arab politics, where governments are unrepresentative of popular will, and many have long functioned as clients for Western interests in the region. There is little doubt that the formal alliance of some Arab states with Western forces in the Gulf in no way reflects the sentiments of their populations. Although this is probably not true of the populations of the Gulf states, who have long felt directly threatened by Iraq, it is certainly true of Syria and Egypt.

Arabs who apparently support Saddam Hussein genuinely disapprove of his monstrous record in office, but they admire his defiance towards the West and Israel. There is no suggestion here that anyone in the Arab world other than a fanatical fringe seriously expects that his leadership could resolve the region's difficulties.

But in Arab eyes, Western action over the Gulf crisis since August 1990 is merely a renewal of US and British imperialism. The assault on Baghdad at the outset of war confirmed this view and served to unite widespread Arab anti-Western, particularly anti-American feeling.

Conversely, support for Saddam Hussein has also become a symbol for this anti-Americanism, and is almost certainly at the root of Third World, especially Latin American, sentiment. For Arabs and Muslims, a whole history of humiliation at Western hands lies behind their approval of Saddam's defiant stand. Not since the days of Nasser have they felt any self-respect. Here now is an Arab leader who has shown himself to be capable not only of standing up to the mightiest military force in the world, but also of retaliating.

Arabs note with pride that the Western objective of an easy victory over Iraq in a short 'surgical' war seems to have been confounded. They dismiss US claims that the war is 'going to plan', noting only that the multi-national force is four weeks into a war which shows no likelihood of ending soon at the time of writing.

For the Palestinians of the Occupied Territories, enthusiasm for Saddam has grown out of increasing despair. For them, as for many Arabs, Israel and America are one. American disinterest in their fate has meant the stalling of negotiations with the PLO towards a settlement and the apparently indefinite toleration by the West of their ill-treatment at Israeli hands. In Saddam they see a strong leader who, for once, puts into action what he promises. They see Israel as the root cause of the problems of the whole region, and many believe that this is, in any case, a proxy war fought by the United States on behalf of Israel. Iraq was the only Arab state capable of challenging Israel's military hegemony over the Middle East, therefore Iraq's military power had to be destroyed in order to restore the status quo. The promptness with which the US rejected Iraq's February 15 offer, widely seen in the Arab world as a genuine peace initiative, can only serve to confirm this view.

The ferment of support for Saddam Hussein, which has now even spread into Britain's own Muslim communities, has several components. Top of the list come anti-imperialism an anti-Americanism. Both derive from a deep sense of grievance and resentment against those Western powers led by the United States which are seen to have carved up the world for their own convenience. Saddam is seen as the Third World leader who dared to challenge the established order imposed by the West, and for that he must be punished and his country destroyed.

This, they believe, is the lesson which other Third World figures contemplating similar action are meant to learn. But it may be that there is a lesson here for the West as well. Ultimately, oppression will go too far and the whole artificial fabric of the familiar world order – which Muslims believe this war is designed to preserve – will be threatened. This may be the real meaning of their support for Iraq and Saddam Hussein.●

*Ghada Karmi*



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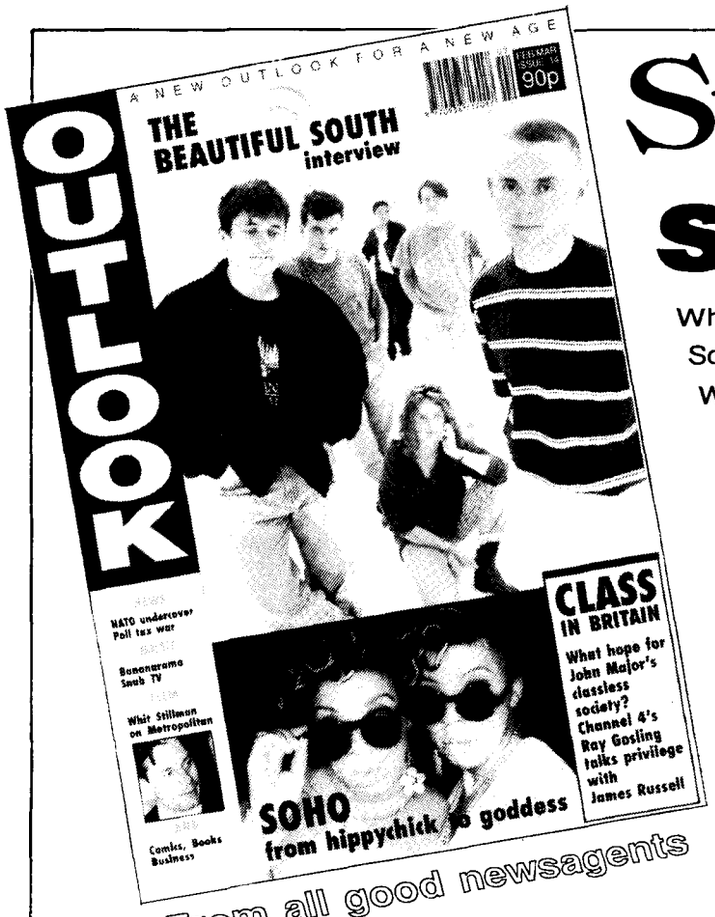
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the United States is considering additional aid of $10 billion to help resettle the Soviet refugees and $3.2 billion for Israeli rearmament.

**Popular response and democracy**

Although some of the West's Arab partners have hinted that they might be able to live with this and that a settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute and the Palestinian issue is no longer at the top of the Arab agenda, this is unlikely to hold true for long. It is certainly not true of Arab public opinion which has long ago accepted the 'linkage' that Washington has been at such pains to discount. Arab public opinion, however, is not considered in Washington or London to have any role to play. Indeed, this refusal to even recognise that the populations of the Arab world do have a role to play in establishing the future stability of the Middle East and North Africa typifies the current state of Western strategic thinking over the region.

In effect, the proposals discussed above take no account at all of popular sentiment. Instead, the regimes which continue to rule by repression because they generally lack any popular legitimacy are to become the jewels in the new Western security crown. No doubt, they – particularly the Gulf states – will be kept in power by Western arms, if popular unrest should threaten their survival, whatever Western hopes for immediate military withdrawal at the end of current hostilities might have been. Yet, one of the catchwords that has been widely heard in Washington and elsewhere during the run up to the war has been the need to create a democratic environment in the Middle East after the war is over. That must also imply that Western politicians recognise the vital contribution that popular support and sanction would have for legitimising the new security proposals now on the table and thereby ensuring that they would be effective.

Apart from the GCC states, where public opinion has been generally conditioned by fear of Iraq, Arab reactions to the war and to Western proposals for security have been virtually unanimously hostile. The hostility has accentuated as hostilities have progressed. Even in Saudi Arabia there has been growing antagonism to the presence of non-Muslim forces there and to the war. Reaction in the wider Muslim world and throughout the South has been similar – in Pakistan, for example, curfews are in force and the military leadership has condemned Pakistan's support for the multi-national force.

Yet regimes in the Arab world, like governments elsewhere, ultimately depend on popular toleration rather than simple repression to maintain themselves in power. They will eventually be forced to adjust their attitudes towards regional security to allow for popular attitudes, rather than for Western preference, or face dangerous domestic unrest and a radical intensification of Islamism and Arab nationalism. In effect, Western attempts to create a security system which does not take this into account cannot anticipate a long-term future. After all, it was attempted in the mid-1950s with the creation of the Baghdad pact – and that led to the collapse of the pro-Western Hashimite monarchy in Iraq, the event from which, ultimately, the Saddam Hussein regime sprang.

**'Arab public opinion is not considered in Washington or London to have any role to play'**

Western politicians do not seem to have learned any lesson from these events, particularly not the fact that, until Arab regimes become acceptable to the populations over which they rule, they will continue to be unstable, repressive and no basis for effective collective security. Ironically enough, some states, such as Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, have begun the painful process of establishing limited democratic structures, but they do not necessarily accept Western views of what security in the Middle East and North Africa should be. And that bodes ill for future stability; after all, King Hussein of Jordan has bowed to popular pressure during the past six months in opposing war and has only earned Western enmity for his democratic behaviour!'●

*George Joffe works at the school of Oriental and African studies, London University*


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## The British Debate

# Playing The War Game

**Sarah Benton** explains why Britain is so keen on going to war

Britain has played no significant role in international affairs for 30 years. We assume that this is because it has not known what role to play. We have been mesmerised by Dean Acheson saying that having lost an empire, Britain has not yet found a role. But the problem is not that Britain has lost its empire. It is that it has lost its nationhood. Without that, it cannot have an international role. To be a nation, said Ernest Renan, one of its great modern theorists, the individuals who make it up must have forgotten many things. In particular, they must have forgotten the acts of violence through which it came into being; and to be a nation, its inhabitants have to have a will to be a nation.

The coming into being over the last 30 years of the political communities of Scotland, Wales, women, Afro-Caribbeans, Asians, Muslims, – each of these is premised on a freshly 'discovered' history of violence. To stay in existence, each of these communities must constantly remind us and themselves, of the violence through which they were subjugated in the first place. This is why 'the Irish never forget', why black history starts with slavery, why feminism constantly returns to male vio-



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lence. Each of these rememberings subverts the nation. As for the will to be a nation: paradoxically, the Thatcherite decade of celebrating the international market over notions of the national good, of decentralising the national interest into five million privately-owned share packages, did more damage than any amount of scheming from Brussels.

We lack more than a will, and a needed oblivion; we lack even the starting point of identity: a name. Where do you live? In Wales, England, Scotland? Northern Ireland, the six counties? Britain. The United Kingdom. Great Britain. The British Isles. What other nation cannot even settle on its own name? What other nation has thrown itself so wishfully into war? Britain's war aim is not to 'liberate Kuwait'. Britain's war aim is to bring itself into being as an international player and from there back into being as Britain. The political psychology of this war is not triumphant, not even gung-ho. It is of a *willed professionalism*. The professional army is substituting for the national will. By acting professionally (dispassionate, responsible, with technical competence) Britain can, through its army, embrace war as a means of creating an identity for itself in today's shifty international order.

For the few months before the Gulf crisis, the political world dissolved and what existed had no clear shape; its familiar forms – the nations and empires – had no clear trajectory. It gave us, as observers, a curious, weightless sense of detachment. Where did we, British citizens, ex-communists, old new leftists, soldiers for socialism, feminist crusaders, belong in this? It was exhilarating too, as though possibility had suddenly been released from the grip of necessity and we could imagine the world we wanted.

Public life in Britain and America was curiously still. American experts on foreign affairs tiptoed round Europe. If they huffed and they puffed would they blow it all down? It was clear the United States was being left out. Was this a good thing, or a bad thing? Thatcher was making a lot of noise about British sovereignty. Americans increasingly heard her cries as the bellowing of the dying bull. In the rush to change, writes Jeane Kirkpatrick in the United States' most prestigious foreign affairs journal, President Bush was a passive spectator. If the world was changing, this was entirely due to the Soviet Union renouncing its 'will to conquest'.

The axis of the great shift in the world ran between Bonn and Moscow, and if Britain was nominally closer to it all than the United States, its political leaders had even less to say. Conservatives shared the Kirkpatrick view of foreign affairs; it was the Soviet Union's will to conquest which had shaped the entire world, plucking into being the entire defensive structure behind which we lived. This is an astonishing view of the world; a perversely reversed megalomania; an assertion that all forms of political and military life were brought into existence by the grand design of the Soviet Union so that if those designs suddenly cease to be hostile, then all that is solid in the West will melt.

Now, six months after the Gulf crisis began, it is as though the world has solidified again. We know where we are. There is a war on, Britain is fighting on the right side. It is standing firm with the United States, in its clipped and undemonstrative sort of way. It has a sensible, pragmatic Conservative leader. The French are behaving in a reliably shifty way. The Germans, thank God, are out of it. We know our place in this world. It's a fantasy. It's a delusion. It's a ludicrous game of make-believe and let's pretend, and the biggest let's pretend is that Britain is fighting a war of principle, on its own terms, for purposes which the people understand and support, and for *aims which can be realised by war*. How come the vast majority of the population appears to want to play make-believe? Because we are accustomed to watching public life as a drama.

**Our drift out of nationhood – a collective,** willed political identity – into a reality we could not shape nor even talk about began a long time ago. Perhaps when we stopped asking what it meant to be fighting a war in Northern Ireland. Britain has been fighting a civil war for 20 years, and we all pretend it hasn't. Perhaps when we continued ordering, often secretly, the most expensive armaments in the world. Perhaps when we fondly remembered the second world war – and engaged in a massive collective oblivion about the causes and costs of that war. Unlike other European nations, Britain has produced no probing retrospectives on its attitudes towards fascism, Jews and war. Or perhaps it was when Margaret Thatcher locked the prime minister away behind heavy iron gates.

ne IRA bomb attack later and what was derided as her paranoia is already assimilated as normal public life. We have lost our sense of how extraordinarily abnormal public life has become. Every political leader is locked inside an impenetrable bubble and wafted around by a gigantic retinue of security advisers to keep us out. Only the methods and technologies of security advisers can tell who is and who is not a terrorist, a traitor, what is a civilian shelter, what is a central communications bunker.

When the conduct of public life is *structured* by professional security advisers, its form determined by anti-terrorism measures, then 'normal' democratic rules are not in command. The Gulf war has intensified the domination of public life by 'security' rules. It has also revealed the terrible nostalgia for an era when the rules of democracy were suspended, and instead military rules were in command. And the requirements of democracy for full information could be quashed as a threat to national security.

**'The biggest let's pretend is that Britain is fighting a war of principle, on its own terms'**

We see this every day at the one point at which British civilians connect to the Gulf: through the media. Those who persistently complain that the media coverage is at worst treacherous, and at best 'an unwitting tool of Saddam Hussein's propaganda machine' would be happy for civilian life to be run according to military rules.

It seems self-evident that war, and the authority of the military and security men, have rendered most of us mere passive spectators because we are powerless to change the course of the story; but also because in the end the war, like national public life, has been put on *for our benefit*. It is we, the spectators, who are expected to again experience what it is to be one nation, all pulling together. And by 'supporting' the war we can feel we are exercising responsibility for the state of the world. Now there's a delusion.

The rhetoric of responsibility has provided Bush and Baker with their new role. Going to war, said Bush, was America taking responsibility for the new world order. And that is the significance of James Baker's speech announcing that the United States would *take responsibility* for rebuilding Iraq and Kuwait. America had lost a role (defending the free world against the Soviet Union) and instantly re-invented another; taking responsibility for the free world. The US, even more than Britain, has had to propel itself into international roles in order to create the illusion of being a united nation-state. This is more of an illusion than it is for Britain because there is even less semblance in the US of centralised, national government. As in Britain, only more so, the United States' search for an intentional role (being responsible) is a search for its own nationhood.

And thus, war is safe, is secure. It pulls into being solid structures. Perhaps we have entered an era of permanent war. Like the cold war, it is, as Mary Kaldor has defined it, an imaginary war, only it has more substance. Orwell imagined it in *1984*; permanent war between the three great regions of the new world order; the necessary structure for a wholly illusory public life. On the whole, this is to the great benefit of government, especially conservative governments which thrive on secrecy, paranoia, a paternalistic control of information and protecting us from outside harm. Hence they accede happily to the alarm about terrorist threats.

For hasn't this war been of immense gain to Bush and Major? Bush, the man who could not handle domestic politics, could not cope with his Republican Party in the budget, had displayed not the slightest interest in the worsening problems of poverty in the United States, could be freed to play war. How convenient. He should have a war that went on forever.●



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# The Mirror Of Unreason

## The demonisation of Saddam Hussein tells us something disturbing about ourselves, **Kevin Robins** suggests

It is just two years since Francis Fukuyama announced the triumph of the Western idea. With the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives, he told us, the ascendancy of western modernity and its universal culture was unchallenged and unchallengeable. With the war now raging in the Middle East we might feel tempted to question such certainty. Not Fukuyama.

For him, the Gulf war is no more than the challenge of a criminal to society. 'We inhabitants of the post-historical world', he trumpets, 'will have to keep in mind that the truly fundamental transformations in world politics are not going on in a desolate Middle Eastern desert, but back in *cette vielle Europe* which was the cradle of the idea of human freedom'.

This is more than just crass. Fukuyama's confidence in the superiority, and the supremacy, of western modernity should be seen as dangerously blind and arrogant. Of course, we can see Saddam as a gangster and a bully, the 'violent boy from Al-Ouja'. Popular psychological accounts in the press tell of a child who was beaten by his step-father and who turned into a self-important, paranoid and sadistic adult.

On a more epic scale, we can imagine how this emotionally crippled child mutated into a second Hitler. His evil and bestial nature stands directly opposed to our just and civilised culture. And don't forget his militant religion: Islamic fanaticism and fundamentalism can never be reconciled with (our) Reason and Truth and Enlightenment.

And so, as so often before, we have the encounter of good and evil. Saddam represents the forces of irrational barbarism that must always be contained and controlled by the forces of reason and sanity. And once again, of course, it is up to *cette vielle Europe* and its civilisational offspring, America, to slay the dragon, to vanquish the alien; these UN crusaders must take on the 'beast of Baghdad' and his 'empire of terror'. Reason, universal reason, must be made to prevail in the new world order – even, or perhaps, especially, in that desolate Middle Eastern desert.

The terror that has ruled in Iraq under Saddam's regime is tragically clear. The atrocities are grimly recorded and documented in reports by Amnesty International and Middle East Watch and in Samir al-Khalil's *Republic Of Fear*. There can be no understatement; we cannot describe these events as other than evil.

But let us not stop here in our excoriations. Remember where many of Saddam's weapons of destruction originated: Britain, the United States, France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy have all played a part in developing his nuclear, chemical and ballistic capabilities. Remember the West's complicity with Iraq when Iran was its Satan. And remember, too, the lessons in scientific death that we in the West have given throughout this bloody century.

It is too easy to project all the evil outwards into that desert and then to believe that all is well in our own garden. Whatever the substance of the case against him, there still remains something fundamentally obscurantist in the demonisation of Saddam. Accusations against his criminality and bestiality are related to the desire to purify our own culture and civilisation.

To see him as the embodiment of irrationality is to be certain of our own rational cause and motives. Which is to say that defences are being erected to protect the integrity of Western culture, of the Western idea. The symbolic damnation of Saddam-Hitler may then reveal a great deal about the fears and anxieties, and maybe even the guilt, of this post-historical world. It may reflect something disturbing at the heart of western modernity and rationality.

Two distinct, though interrelated, forces have shaped modern Western culture and identity. The first, associated with the European Enlightenment, has been the centrality of reason as the constitutive principle of modernity itself. The Enlightenment was about the dissolution of 'pre-modern' custom and tradition, and its replacement by a more formal and rational management of economic and political life. Above all, instrumental and purposive rationality has been at the heart of the whole project of Western science and technology which has, over the last two centuries, transformed the natural and social orders.

The second force defining the modern West has been the intensive and intense encounter with other cultures brought about by imperialist expansion. Something new was developing in the 19th century, argues the historian Albert Hourani, something 'created by the vast expansion of the European mind and imagination so as to appropriate all existing things.'

In this quest to appropriate the world the West learned to define its own uniqueness against *the other*, against 'non-Europe'. If the political reality has always been one of conflict and disunity, the



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Illustration: Alain Pilon

construction of an imaginary Orient helped to give unity and coherence to the idea of the West. This Orient was, moreover a mirror in which Europe (and subsequently America) could see reflected its own supremacy. In learning to account for its difference from non-Europe, it also had to account for this supremacy, for the unquestionable success it had had in imposing its hegemony on 'inferior' cultures.

Fundamental to both its difference and its inherent superiority, it seemed, was the principle of rationality. It was on this basis of this rationality, embodied in modern science and technology, that *cette vielle Europe* had triumphed throughout the world, had made itself the universal point of reference. This rationality it came to see as the basis of a universal culture; the justification for its claim to define universal values, to define its values as universal.

Modernity is defined against pre-modernity, reason against irrationality and superstition, and this divide is mapped on to a symbolic geography that counterposes the West and its Orient. *Its* Orient, because if 'the West' did not exist, then the Orient could not exist either. It is 'the West' that has given both existence and identity to 'the Orient'. And the existence and identity it has bestowed is one of constitutive inferiority and deficit.

Oriental culture is a subaltern culture, conceived through the very process of its subjugation and subordination to the universal culture. And it is a culture defined by what it lacks (modernity, rationality, universality); its 'otherness' is defined in terms of the backwardness, the irrationality and the particularity of its values.

This confrontation has assumed its most intense and confrontational form in the encounter with Islam. Since the time of the crusades, the relation between Muslims and Christians has been founded on mistrust, misgivings and misunderstandings. In the Middle East, the experience of modernity and modernisation could only be negotiated in the context of a long history of colonial and missionary activities. In this region, it was an involuntary experience, another kind of crusading invasion, and it involved a deep sense of despair and humiliation.

Hourani describes a sense of secondariness in contemporary Arab identity: 'It is no longer to have a standard of values of one's own, not to be able to create but only to imitate; and so not even to imitate correctly, since that also needs a certain originality.' In the face of self-proclaimed Western universalism, Islamic and Arabic culture was shaken to its foundation.

Within the terms of this self-proclaiming universal culture, moreover, there could be no escape from this degradation. Islam was inferior in its very essence. In Western eyes (though contrary to historical evidence), it was constituted as a conservative culture, a culture of dogmatism and fanaticism. History and progress were possible only in the West. Islam, by contrast, was a static culture, an eternally medieval and feudal culture; it was the culture of impossible modernisation. And it could not be otherwise.

It could not be otherwise because the very difference and supremacy of the West were constructed around this image of Arab and Islamic otherness. 'Our' civilisation was defined against 'their' barbarism; 'our' beauty against 'their' bestiality. If that irrational culture had access to our rationality and science, what would be the implications for the Western sense of difference and uniqueness? If that backward culture could modernise itself, where would we then find the mirror to reflect our superiority.

This unthinkable predicament of modernity in the Orient is what now confronts the West in the Gulf. In this war, Saddam is assaulting the norms that have defined Western uniqueness and superiority; he is violating the boundaries that have differentiated rationality and irrationality, Western modernity and the pre-modern Orient. He has armed himself with the munitions of modernity, not only with 'conventional arms', but also with an arsenal of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

But he is by nature – by his Arab and Oriental nature – irrational. When equipped with the scientific instruments of warfare, Saddam's inherent irrationality can only become explosive; with modern technologies he is a monstrous and psychotic force. The armies of Reason, the allies of the post-historical world, must then suppress this crazed Unreason. They must outlaw the 'mad dog'. They must crush what defence secretary Tom King has called Iraq's 'monstrous military machine'. What cannot be tolerated is the monster that pretends to modernity.

We have imagined Saddam in terms which stand diametrically opposed to our civilisation and culture.We have imagined him as absolutely, and monstrously, 'other'. To see him in this way has made it possible – has made it logical and rational – to set fire to the night skies of Iraq. But is that what Saddam is?



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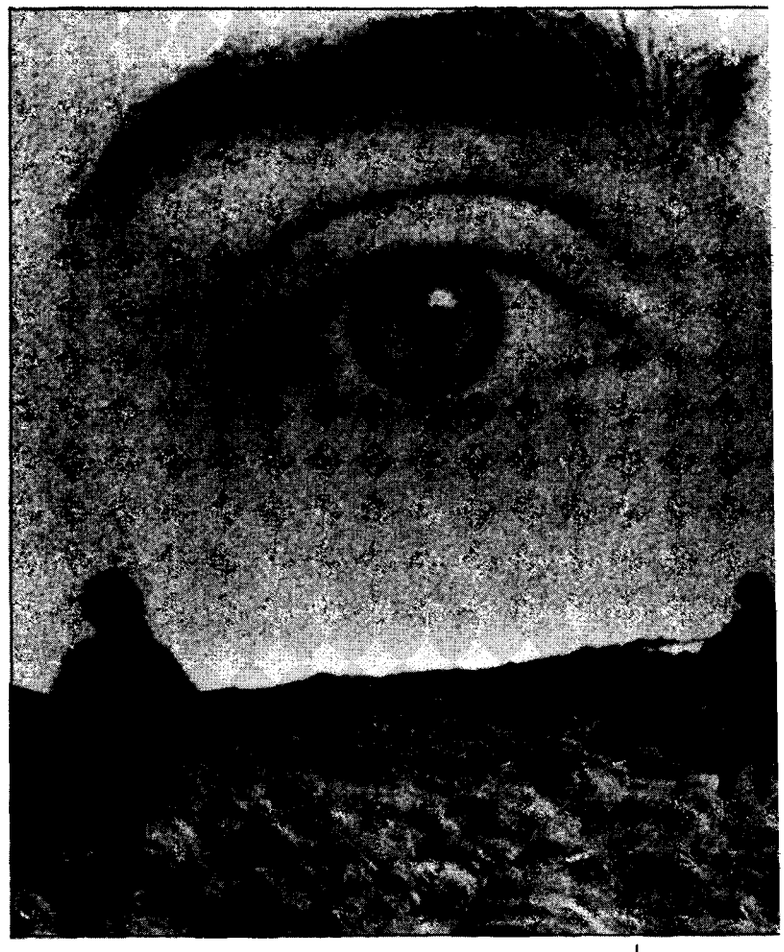
**Dave Hill** on Gulf gullibility

# Word Wars



While digesting my daily dose of Gulf wallpaper the other week, I chanced upon a Radio 4 telephone spat between an editor from ITN and Nicholas Soames MP, a Tory backbencher. ITN film reports from the ruins of Baghdad, fronted by Brent Sadler, had got Soames' goat. He complained that Sadler and the ITN crew were compiling their material under the supervision of Iraqi minders and subject to the distortions of the Iraqi censors. Soames spluttered like a malfunctioning Scud: not only was this biased journalism, he fumed, but 'frankly, disloyal'.

This kind of chauvinism is, of course, perfectly normal coming from sections of today's Conservative Party, except that it is normally directed at the 'Anti-British Broadcasting Corporation'. But what struck me about this particular outburst, emerging as it did in the midst of the most media-intensive war in history, was its implicit assumption about the gullibility of the British public.

After all, ITN's bulletins have made no attempts to deceive us about the influence of Iraqi minders over Sadler's reports. And while it has doubtless occurred to the company's editors that such a policy goes some way to covering their asses in the event of attack by 'patriotic' critics, the benefit to the viewer is no less valuable for that.

We know the context in which the reports are compiled and can exercise our judgement accordingly. In the view of Nicholas Soames, though, such a capacity for reasoned assessment is, apparently, almost non-existent. Conclusion? ITN is carrying Iraqi propaganda and the public is being deceived.

Only a complete media illiterate could leap to such a conclusion. Just because we appear to be gorging ourselves on war coverage

Is he the primitive and irrational alien? Might there not be reason in his madness?

Saddam uses our weapons, the weapons that we have sold him, and he uses them, like us, in a rational and calculating way. He is a cunning military strategist: he has a 'game plan' for the war, and, according to General Colin Powell, he is 'resourceful' and 'ingenious' in implementing it. Saddam embodies the aspirations and logic of modernity. He is modernity as it now exists in that part of the world. Saddam is a mirror – a distorting mirror perhaps, but a mirror nonetheless – reflecting an image of us.

The West does not like what it sees in that mirror. But let us be clear about just what it is that it is seeing. It is the monstrous side of its own modernity; it is the irresistible spread of its own project, a project that has been marked by both rationality and violence. Saddam is not an alien monster, a monster against modernity, but rather a monster born of modernity, a monster within modernity. As the Liberal Democrat leader, Paddy Ashdown, unwittingly intimated, 'we are now haunted by a monster which we helped to create'. This is the paradoxical truth that we cannot stomach.

Many commentators have described the creation of a Frankenstein's monster in Iraq. Like Mary Shelley's creature, Saddam is a monster created through the global spread of modernity. In him, too, our fear of modernity's monstrous aspect is projected onto an elemental hatred of the 'other'. Saddam must be a race apart.

If Iraq is in the process of modernisation, then it is an alien kind of modernity that can never be acceptable to the civilised world. Like Frankenstein's monster, Saddam must be banned from civilisation. Only through his exclusion can reason be reclaimed in the name of universal progress and humanity. And so the 'smart' technologies of Western reason are now being mobilised to smash the 'other'.

Saddam is, nonetheless, a part of modernity. Can we ignore the reality that, in this global culture, there is no place that modernity has not reached? How can we continue to de-link the 'other'; from the project of modernity? Saddam's means of war are products of modern science and technology, as are those even more lethal systems being unleashed against him by the Western allies. It is difficult for us to acknowledge that violence and destruction, on both sides, are expressions of 'rational' behaviour; that 'reason' may be at the heart of violence.

If Saddam's third-world modernity is contaminated by a direct and brutal violence, the military exploits of post-historical modernity are, by contrast, clinical, surgical and sanitised. We are fascinated by the way our 'smart weapons' are mobilised to 'knock out' and 'take apart', to 'neutralise' and 'cleanse', enemy targets in what is called the 'theatre' of Iraq and Kuwait. We are seduced by what science can do in the name of freedom and civilisation. What distinguishes us from Saddam is our superior, perhaps supreme, ability to screen out the death and mutilation. It is this that makes us more advanced. We are simply better at being modern.

The allies, George Bush tells us, are 'on the side of God'. 'I have resolved all moral questions in my mind', he says, 'this is black versus white, good versus evil'. With our moral rectitude, our modernity and military science, we look set to prevail against the evil Saddam and his ramshackle modernity. The Western idea will stumble on. Its post-history will be driven by the same fantasies and phobias as its wretched and ravaging history. White versus black. Good versus evil. Us against them. But at what cost?

The Spanish reporter, Alfonso Roja, describes a woman in Baghdad, her eyes smouldering, shouting down at a crowd of Western journalists: 'Is this what you call Western civilisation?'●



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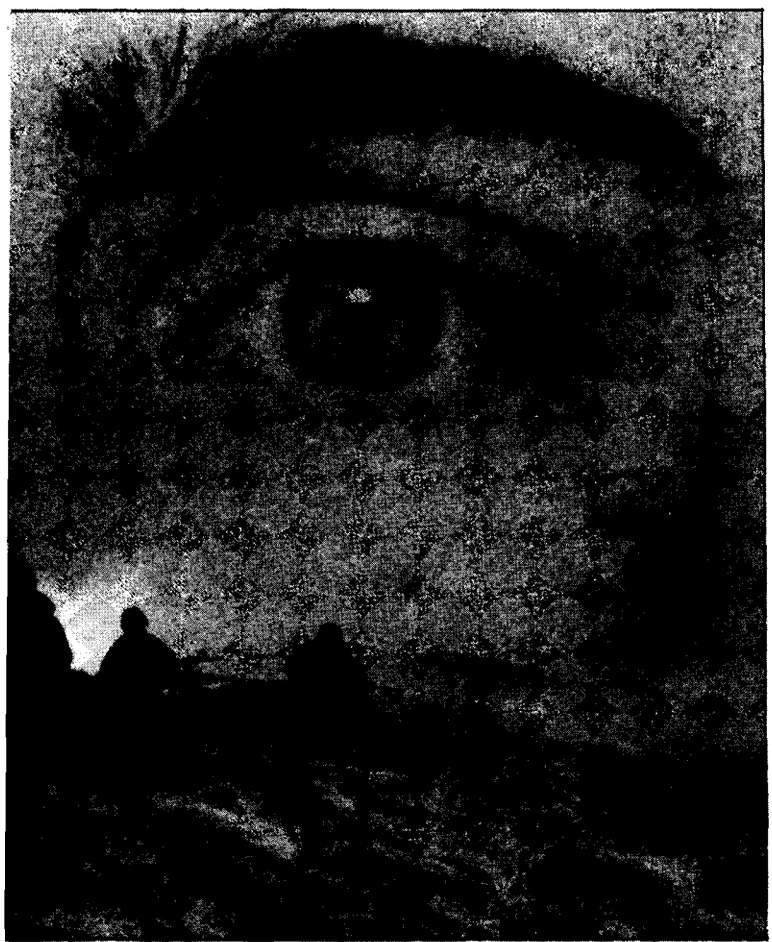

doesn't mean to say that we swallow it whole. Gone are the days when concerned voices, from purblind Right or knee-jerk Left, could get away with glib diatribes about 'media brainwashing'.

As for propaganda, well, half a century back, the Blitz generation didn't believe even their own government's pronouncements half the time. With the mass media now part of everyday life and with arguments about bias and balance commonplace, the modern British subject is not likely to succumb to some Saddam sucker punch thrown by the third party from the corner of the living room.

Maybe that is the problem for Soames and his kind. Deep down they fear we aren't believing 'our' own information sources either. And not without cause. Opinion polls which have consistently reflected large majorities in favour of Britain's military role in the Gulf, have also found widespread ambivalence about the true motives for it.

Despite the leading coalition partners' endless trumpeting of their unimpeachable moral purpose – all that pious flannel about 'the liberation of Kuwait' – those believing the true purpose to be ensuring the flow of oil, has been measured at over 40%.

There is another, concomitant, reason for suspecting widespread scepticism about 'official' versions of the war and it lies in the proliferation of global media networks. In his book *Gotcha! – The Media, The Government And The Falklands Crisis*, Robert Harris noted the dismay of Ministry of Defence officials at the readiness of British tv to report the enemy's view of the war, even using Argentine footage.

Partly, this was because broadcasters realised that the Argentinian version of events was often more reliable than the British. The same suspicions, particularly in relation to civilian casualties, doubtless apply to footage from Baghdad.

More mundanely, it was also because the supply of pictures and information from the frontline was so meagre that tv companies had precious little material with which to fill their programmes. One consequence of all this was that when a Commons Defence Committee later met to disentangle the many grievances, John Nott – the defence secretary who 'misled' the commons about the circumstances of the sinking of the General Belgrano – explained: 'In a few years' time, with satellites, the task of censorship will become an impossible one.' In other words, if broadcasters no longer have to depend on 'official' sources, how can we control what the public sees and hears? The answer in 1991 is: not as easily as 'we' would like.

On the face of it, those policing information from the Gulf war have less problems with the great bulk of the British press. With no editors and only a handful of high-profile journalists opposing the conflict, and with the majority of newspapers dutifully baying for Iraqi blood, Fleet Street could hardly be more acquiescent. And yet the same disjuncture between messages sent and opinions received must apply as much here as with the electronic media.

The fact that the gung-ho tabloids have wrapped themselves in the Union Jack does not mean that they are accurately reflecting the public mood. It is a matter of common wisdom that such newspapers cannot be trusted. Perhaps all they are really reflecting is their public's depressing penchant for horror-show kitsch and spectacularly well-told lies.

Such factors are important to bear in mind when considering the apparently unassailable support for John Major and Britain's role in this enterprise. The inconsistencies in public opinion point to the existence of a substantial section of opinion characterised by a cynicism almost as profound as that which lurks beneath the celestial rhetoric of George Bush.

For while there are many for whom the decimation of Baghdad is guided by a fine and noble sense of justice, many others find themselves with effectively no alternative but to support 'our government'/'our boys'/'freedom' or whatever other option is put before them, in spite of their doubts about the validity of the whole bloody exercise.

On the face of it, then, John Nott's fears about the consequences of the end of wholesale censorship have not yet been borne out. What has come to his rescue is an altogether subtler kind of ideas and information-limitation whose effectiveness is, if anything, enhanced by the fact that it cannot easily be explained in terms of conspiracies and blunt propaganda.

For, while editorial priorities and earth-shrinking technologies can and do work against the interests of the war's officialdom, the degree to which even the less servile sections of the media provide a platform for coherent dissenting views is incredibly limited.

Amid the avalanche of Gulf War coverage, the historical backdrop to Saddam's brutal rise has barely been drawn. The double-dealing of the United States (Saddam's sneaking ally in the desperate Iran-Iraq war) has hardly been mentioned. Meanwhile, an almost entirely supine parliamentary opposition has confirmed that the political culture which is supposed to ensure our much-vaunted freedom of opinion has stagnated to the point of inertia.

Everyone, in the end, has decided to fight a 'patriotic' war. So while the type of tv reporting that so upsets Nicholas Soames may add to a sense of doubt already nagging away in many British minds, when the opinion pollster calls it is reduced to the level of painful anecdote. When saying 'no' feels like a trip down a dead-end road to treason, what else is there to say but 'yes'?●



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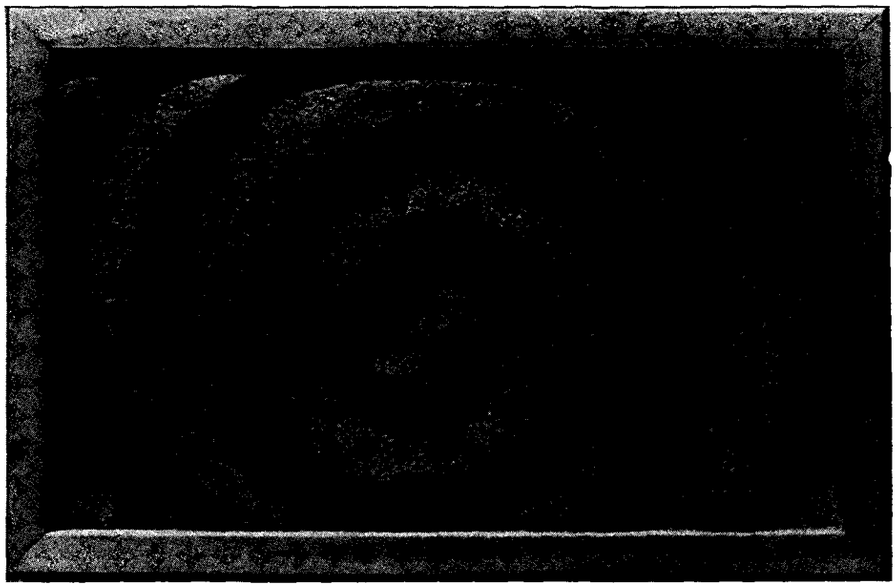
**Dick Hebdige** stands back from the virtual war

# Bombing Logic



We are 'involved' in the most thoroughly mediated war in history but now more than ever vicarious contact with the front line via blanket news coverage fails to guarantee comprehensibility, still less access to the truth. The battlefield today is electronic. Wars are waged, as ever, over real territory and real spheres of influence. But conflicts between 'major players' are now also conducted in a 'virtual' space where rival hypothetical scenarios, 'realised' as computer simulations, fight it out over the data supplied by satellites.

Meanwhile, hygienically edited highlights of the action get replayed nightly on the news through ghostly green videos shot through the night-sight viewfinders of airborne artillery. In this screened space anything can happen but little can be verified.

The Gulf war has demonstrated that the mere accumulation of data doesn't confer an automatic advantage unless it is complemented by quality analysis and contextual detail. Witness, for example, the wildly discrepant assessments of the effectiveness of allied air-raids in the first days of the war or the 'classification error' which led to the deaths of hundreds of civilians in Baghdad.

Decoy and sabotage have moved far beyond Saddam's cardboard tanks and missile launchers. These strategies are now incorporated into weapons design in the form of 'logic bombs' – computer viruses built into weapons systems sold for export, which are programmed to go off when targeted on the system's country of origin. The existence of such systems is less important than the fact that they are technically feasible and get reported as such.

The speed, spread and penetration of electronic communications mean that these ploys play an increasing public role not just in the 'theatre' of military operations but also in the diplomatic wrangling which custom decrees takes place 'behind the scenes'. Radio Baghdad's offer to withdraw from Kuwait, for example, was broadcast in advance of Gorbachev's meeting with Tariq Aziz to raise the meeting's diplomatic stakes.

The role of information in an internationally mediated environment has sinister implications when combined with the new high-tech modes of warfare currently being tested in the Gulf. As tv onlookers we are placed at the centre of events no human being could ever witness in the flesh, by close-ups of a bomb's-eye view of the interior of a ventilator shaft right up to the moment of impact.

But the larger picture is systematically distorted by the military and political calculations concerning the strategic uses of information and disinformation. Whole chunks of 'enemy territory' are 'disappeared' by means of censorship, radar and the wholesale destruction of Iraqi communications facilities. Politically as well as militarily sensitive targets are also 'taken out' in this process.

Thus in a bid to weaken Arab support for allied action, Saddam turned the bunker deaths of Iraqi citizens into an international photo-opportunity while allied and Iraqi intelligence continue to collude in suppressing images of the dead Iraqi conscripts slaughtered by the bombing of Kuwait. With the BBC 'illustrating' the cluster bombing of Iraqi airfields with an arms manufacturer's demonstration video, tv's claim to 'show it like it is' in 1990 appears as obscene as it did in the Falklands war.

Even more than in the earlier conflict, direct vetting of journalists' copy and reliance on allied debriefings ensure that military priorities squeeze out alternative perspectives and agendas. When reduced still further in the fires of competing Arab nationalist and allied 'neo-internationalist' populisms, this urge to simplicity threatens to distil the conflict into an opposition between Good and Evil. However, the fact that the polls seem to indicate that gung-ho reductionism hasn't really taken off this time round suggests a significant advance on the Falklands' spirit.

It may be that this is the first post-modern war, not just because it's 'screened' but because the consensus in the West for war appears to be reluctant. It remains unconvinced about the plausibility of 'ultimate victory' in the face of the region's myriad problems and widespread anti-Western animus and sceptical towards the categories of 'Goodies v Baddies', which have been used in the past to call the West to arms.

It is significant that P J O'Rourke reports in the *Observer* that no pejorative term has been coined among allied troops for the Iraqis. 'There is no Gook or Kraut or Nip for this war', he writes, 'and the only Iraqi jokes I've heard have been on the telephone from back home'. Like the rest of us, the soldiers learn what is happening in the Gulf by watching CNN.

But there are other lessons to be drawn from what the war makes visible – in the image of a desert war bogged down in muddy trenches worthy of the Somme in the wettest Saudi winter in memory or in the prophetic footage of cormorants drowning in the worst oil disaster yet recorded. For the world's first totally screened war has placed a mirror at our disposal. In it we can see reflected the ecological, psychological, spiritual damage and the massive human waste of this war.

These are the products of a technological mastery untempered by a political imagination capable of either managing it in the interest of the planet, or of inventing a machinery capable of arbitrating between differences of interest without condoning the annihilation of one side or the other. The challenge – more urgent now than it was even in the cold war – is to think differently and to act otherwise.●



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**Raja Ahmed** is an Iraqi living in Britain

# Broken Bridges

I went to Baghdad last December to spend Christmas with my family. I have been living in Britain since 1970, almost half of my life has been spent here. We did not know what the future might hold and had to face the possibility that we may not see each other again.

My relatives and friends lived in fear of nuclear attack or bombardment by chemical weapons. Every discussion of the crisis facing Iraq ended with a sense of doom. In public, people tried to carry on with their lives, while at home they were starting to prepare for what was to come.

As I prepared to return to Britain, several of my relatives gave me copies of their identity cards, the deeds for their houses and even the ownership documents for their property. I was to keep them safe and eventually give them to anyone who survived. My sister buried all her valuables, showing me the spot so that I could tell her children where they were in case she was killed. Since then her husband has died of a heart attack, no doubt a result of the stress caused by the endless bombing of Baghdad.

Even officials showed the same kind of fatalism. As I checked in at Baghdad airport, I found that I had 100kg of excess luggage. It was mainly books that I was trying to preserve. After haggling with the airline official and trying to make sure that I didn't have to pay the charges with foreign currency, the woman in charge suddenly said: 'All right, pay in Iraqi dinars!' She took only 16, about two pounds at the black market rate. When I expressed surprise, she replied: 'Well, what would we do with the money? We only have two more days.'

There was a feeling of exhaustion from eight years of wars, which the allies thought would turn the people against Saddam and lead the way to surrender. But a friend, who arrived from Baghdad in the middle of February, informed me that morale is now high. Even those who opposed the rule of Saddam and who would have welcomed anyone to topple him are now defiant.

Iraq is Mesopotamia: the land between two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. It is the oldest country in the world, where writing and the wheel were invented. It is the land of Babylonians and Assyrians. But as far as the government, politicians and media in Britain are concerned the war is only taking place in the desert. We know about the Desert Shield with the Desert Rats and now it is the Desert Storm. Iraq is only shown to be Saddam and the desert; the people of Iraq are without faces and voices.

The public ignorance of the history and geography, the current problems and grievances of the Arab world helps to explain the 75% support for the war. It may also explain the anti-Arab sentiment. My experience here has been positive. My professional friends, British, Europeans and Americans, who know the Middle East, have been most supportive, many are even apologetic. But I heard only this morning the story of an Arab girl whose parents have had to remove her from school because she was receiving threatening messages.

The media do not help with their obsessive references to Iraqi censorship. I wonder if the journalists in Riyadh are allowed to report freely? Have the allies shown any of their casualties or dead? I have yet to see an Iraqi journalist reporting from Saudi Arabia. I am astonished there has been silence about the anti-war demonstrations that took place in most Arab cities from Morocco to Syria. This dismissal of the importance of Arab opinion is perplexing. The double standard is so obvious.

Some days ago I saw pictures of the Baghdad suspension bridge being destroyed. I had seen many pictures of attacks on the city but somehow seeing that bridge destroyed, it suddenly hit me what is happening to Baghdad. It was such a beautiful bridge, surrounded by date palm orchards, I used to cross it almost every day on my way to work. The bridge was like a symbol which suddenly made me realise what is happening to that country.

There are times when I think that this cannot be real. I am afraid that I may be watching my own family and friends being killed. Tonight for the first time I was deeply worried after seeing the pictures of the attack on a civilian shelter. I feel sure that someone I know must have been in there. Until now I have always thought that it is such a big city with so many people that my family may be safe but tonight I am afraid because this shelter was in an area where they are living. When I saw those images and heard the Arabic voices in the back-ground I cried. I had to stop watching because there was too much emotion.

I am still learning the power of national identity. When Iraq first invaded Iran I was against the war. I knew it was wrong but as time went on I found that despite myself I was hoping that Iraq would win. I suddenly discovered what patriotism is and how powerful it can be, even when it is buried very deep inside. Even though I was against the war, those 'patriotic' feelings were there. So I do not blame those people here in Britain who support the war and who hope that the allies win. I understand where such feelings come from and the strength they can have.

But this war is not simply the result of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. I am sure that there has been much more scheming involved and the invasion, which I have always opposed, was the opportunity for this action to be unleashed.●

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**Jane Taylor** is a conscientious objector

# The Last March

Ever since I can remember I have been going on demonstrations. But not this time. I am a conscientious objector. I will not march with the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf. I expect people stop demonstrating for all sorts of reasons: age, infirmity clashing responsibilities, or sheer apathy. But also politics.

Ironically, my immediate reaction to the outbreak of war was to fling myself in my imagination into the Royal Ascot of all demos, Vietnam. As a reference point in popular protest it's pretty powerful, Vietnam. Even those of us too young to have been part of it are still under the spell of the culture of activism formed around it.

But my kneejerk resolve faded. I absented myself from a couple of demos. And was glad I did. Because although I feel passionately about the Gulf war – how unnecessary it was, how obscene its prosecution is, how devastating its outcome may yet be – I know that my opposition would be diminished, subverted even, by marching with the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf.

I have two political objections. Firstly, I object to the bite-sized, stick-on solutions being peddled by the Committee. 'America out of the Gulf!' – Sure. 'Saddam out of Kuwait!' – Yes. 'Immediate ceasefire!' – Eh? 'Stop War!' – No. No, this is not reality. At best, it is naivete. At worst, it is placebo politics, selling a deceit to make people feel better. I do not want to stand up and be counted as a supporter of those demands.

Secondly, I object to the marching. I can imagine nothing less likely to be an empowering experience. I shudder at the recollection of those long, cold hours standing around followed by long, deserted routes where the only struggle is you versus the wind, trying to keep the banner upright. And I am no longer prepared to put up with the various parasitical fringe groups, ranging from the self-importantly irrelevant to the downright obnoxious, who are an unchanging part of the demo scene.

Much as CND may distance itself from these groups, its rhetoric and practice of opposition is an open invitation for their malign political presence. Others may be perfectly sanguine about such bedfellows, personally, I would like to be able to choose another form of political participation. None is on offer.

I bet I am not the only stay-away. The Gulf conflict is particularly ill-suited to the traditional left culture of opposition, which relies on being able to mark out ideological ground in antagonism to the prevailing consensus and then trying to win converts. So much the better if the odds are very heavily stacked against you, or if the consensus involves jingoistic patriotism, the use of armed force, or is pro-American – all points of ambivalence for the left.

Yet the political and moral certainties of the old polarities have dissolved. The Gulf conflict is a messy, complex affair, to which the most natural response is for people to shake their heads and confess to not knowing the answers. Would that CND had the courage to say so. Or that some of our national politicians were allowed to say so. For as much as I reject the demo mentality, I also despair at the apolitical bipartisanship of our national mainstream parties.

Throughout this conflict I have felt largely unrepresented. If I had to nominate those politicians whose views I most trusted, who have most clearly articulated my own fluid, contingent thoughts on the crisis as it developed, I would opt for two pensionable septuagenarians, both of whom I despised in their political heyday: Denis Healey, who sold the Labour government to the IMF, and Ted Heath, who became the Tories' lamest duck of all. Yet here we are, Denis and Ted and I, and countless nameless others, out in the political wilderness.

Still, at least I know what those two are thinking. That is more than I can say about the Liberal Democrats, who seem to be headed for their own Westminster bunker *en masse*, or for Robin Cook, Clare Short, John Prescott or Chris Smith – all of whose views I would in normal times respect and follow with interest. Despite the fact that all are senior and serious Labour figures, since we have been at war, they have been either confined to briefs or otherwise disciplined.

It's indicative of that enfeebled culture of opposition that Labour's insecurity prevents intelligent and thoughtful politicians from airing their reservations and doubts in public. *People* know that the Gulf crisis is troubling and contradictory. Why on earth should we be surprised or aggrieved if politicians find it that way too? To acknowledge those differences is not a sign of weakness. But to make political sense out of doubt and qualification demands a higher quality of debate, analysis and representation than the old conviction politics. A handful of commentators and politicians are trying hard to produce that. Their writings and comments have a confessional tone, and no wonder. They are stepping over the invisible, moralistic Maginot Line of the old culture of opposition.

I, too, want no more part of it. I want instead a humane, moral, critical and intelligent, culture of dissent, which would deploy political energies in very different ways. I can't prescribe what that culture of dissent would be. I can most clearly explain it in terms of the absences of thinking and doing.

There's the lack of national political debate which raises the tough, awkward questions that will act as restraints upon those controlling the conflict, and could set the tone for the longer-run peace. There's the absence of serious consideration, beyond a handful of wary churchmen, of who bears moral responsibility for the creation that is Saddam Hussein.

Where are the networks to support and give refuge to those Arabs, long resident in this country, who, like Abbas Shiblak, are now illegally threatened with deportation? Who is pressuring our schools into tackling the ugly spin-off of the war into anti-Muslim playground racism in our inner-cities?

We should have produced campaigns by now to identify and bring to justice the inevitable sanctions-busters. I can recall no initiatives from the myriad environment and energy groups about seizing the opportunity to force the pace on alternative energy policies. No one has asked me to contribute material aid for Iraqi civilians who have lost everything in the allied bombing.

But I have been asked to give blood. It was in a news bulletin, just after the war broke, and it seemed an entirely practical, positive, useful thing to do. So I am going to do it.●



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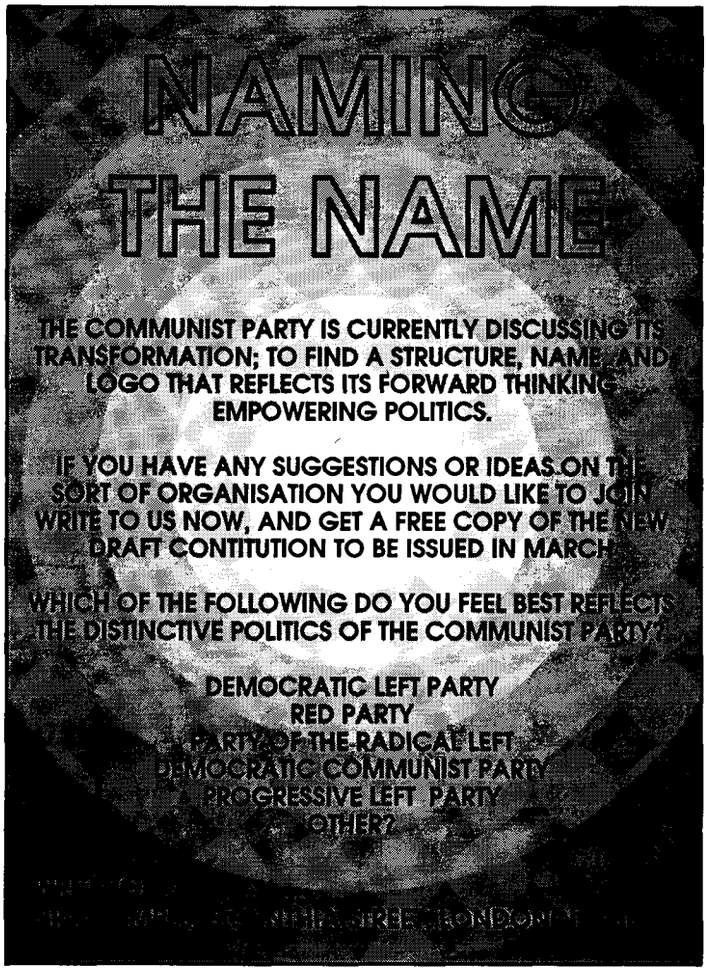
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**Geoff Mulgan** on the rising tide of information

# Brain Wave

Alvin Toffler is arguably the world's leading public intellectual. Every 10 years he publishes a weighty tome about social life, the universe and everything, which then proceeds to sell by the bucket throughout the world. Each is a wild mix of anecdote, sweeping generalisation and nuggets of pure insight, on everything from technology to sexuality, the new firm to the new world order, all in a breathless torrent.

1991's offering is **Power Shift** (*Bantam Press, hbk £16.99*), a suitably fat successor to 1980's *The Third Wave* and 1970's *Future Shock*. Like its predecessors, it is structured around a simple thesis – in this case, that information and knowledge are setting in motion a profound shift in the nature and location of power. Unlike them it is marked by surprising uncertainty. Where the Toffler of *The Third Wave* was confident about the future, albeit with the 'smokestack' politicians and institutions of the second wave of mass society in its way, this Toffler is hesitant, fearful of violence, repression, global instability and the yearnings for a new Dark Age.

More than in previous works, his still-traceable marxism (he was once a trotskyite) keeps him one step away from 'gee-whiz' futurology. He starts, for example, by castigating the absence of power from the economists' models: instead, 'from the day the first palaeolithic warrior smashed a rock into a small animal, violence has been used to produce wealth'. Much of the book then proceeds to detail the new forms of economic power, from the Yakuza to the electronic networks which undermine the power both of the state and the banks.

But economic power no longer resides in the material world. The crude belief that a service economy is nothing more than McDonald's writ large is correctly dismantled. Manufacturing remains a significant force, but with an ever-decreasing share of the workforce. The old idea that manufacture is macho, hardheaded, practical, realistic, while production of knowledge is effeminate, is shown to be disabling.

Instead, he argues, the proletariat becomes a cognitariat, working with symbols. The key questions about jobs in both offices and factories now concern 'how much of the job entails information processing... it is, what level of abstractions is involved, what access the person has to the central data bank and management information system, and how much autonomy and responsibility the individual enjoys'.

An informational economy has peculiar characteristics. Value no longer comes from capital or the worker (as in neo-classical or marxist economics) but from the system that puts everything together. Crucially, too, in Michael Milken's words, 'human capital has replaced dollar capital'. Unemployment is no longer an effect of demand. Instead, in an open world economy, unemployment is more likely to be genuinely structural, a problem of an underskilled workforce in an economy that demands highly socialised and trained labour.

The need for informational flexibility undermines old organisational structures: 'adhocracy' takes over as leaders seek to bypass hierarchies. New informational strategies of leaking, blowback (planting stories in the foreign press), and tidal waves (which drown opponents in useless information) become central to the craft of political life. The same is true of the control of statistics through manipulation and massage, whether of GDP, unemployment or body counts. Those who are technologically and informationally illiterate find themselves unable to 'work the system'.

Large political conflicts do take on informational overtones. Toffler interprets Irangate as, ultimately, a conflict between the presidency and Congress over information: being informed is essential for either to control foreign policy.

If capitalism is on a headlong cascade into a new world, socialism, he says, 'collided with the future', let down as much as anything by its failure to understand information and organisation, its doomed attempt to apply the modes of engineering to thought, and its obsession with hardware rather than software. Where Marx turned Hegel on his head to create historical materialism, Toffler argues, history turned Marx on his head as the informational determines the material.

But if socialism has collided with the future, capitalism too faces its own fair share of phantoms, many of them internally generated. One is the disruption of rational decision-making about the crucial problems facing the world caused by the circulation of false realities and massaged information. Another is the global financial system, since 'building a single completely open financial system, subject to minimal regulation, is like building a supertanker without airtight compartments... a single hole in the hull can sink the tanker'.

Meanwhile, the rise of 'a new kind of economy... threatening to many, demanding rapid changes in work, life-style and habits, hurls large populations terrified of the future into spasms of diehard reaction... instead of the much-touted end of ideology, we may, in both global and domestic affairs, see a multiplicity of new ideologies spring up... instead of President Bush's famous thousand points of light we may well face a thousand fires of fury.' As the Middle East burns under a potent combination of Western information technology and chemical 'ordinance', the benign third wave may now be being drowned in a less benign fourth or fifth wave.

Toffler is widely reviled. He is the populariser and jack of all trades par excellence, intensely vulnerable to the scorn of the experts, and to people who wouldn't be seen dead reading the kind of book that is piled high in airport bookshops. Yet here, in his uncharacteristic hesitancy, the penetrating and infuriating Alvin Toffler is probably as good a reflection of the 1990s as anyone else.●



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**Sue Townsend** is English but not proud of it

# True Brit

When asked my nationality, I invariably answer 'English'. I know this is frowned on – we are all supposed to be Brits today, a happy cohesion of cultures – but my Glaswegian friends would sooner drink Babycham than write 'British' in the box provided. And doesn't this also go for the Welsh and the Irish? So why this squeamishness about admitting to being English?

I know why, and I resent it. The word has been commandeered by *The Sun*, the Tory Party and the Royal Family. So sensitive lefty souls have turned their faces away and taken to calling themselves 'Britons.' But where will it all end? What will future Dave Sparts enter in the hotel register under 'nationality'? 'British and European and World citizen, but also member of Universe and Galaxarian'?

I'm the first to admit that the English have been utter bastards. I bow my head in shame when I think of the countries we've looted and the people we've subjugated. But the descendants of those countries are now having their quiet revenge.

Marsha Rowe has edited an anthology of short stories which she has entitled **So Very English** (*Serpent's Tail, pbk* £7.99). One expects to see a picture of a toothy Joyce Grenfell on the front cover, and inside a 'frightfully, frightfully amusing' or 'cor guv', strike a light, hain't we English got some funny little ways' stuff. But *So Very English* is not a celebration of Englishness; it is a sly and subtle demolition job. There are 33 stories and poems in this compilation. I'll mention a few of my favourites.

Roy Heath's 'According To Marx' is a little gem about the disenchantment of Debendranath Ghose on trying to join the Acton branch of the Communist Party. Gohar Kordi's autobiographical story, 'From Missionary School To Mitcham', is upfront about the differences between Iranians and the English. Her moving account of her mother mourning her father's death is particularly effective. Contrast the English praise of a widow at a funeral, 'she held up well', with the ritualised outpouring of Iranian grief, complete with howling, wailing and tearing of hair – 'What am I going to answer the children when you ask me where is their father? Where have you gone? Why have you left us?'

After 40 days she is encouraged to put aside her black clothes, but she receives positive family support. Gohar Kordi writes: 'What would have been the work of psychotherapy in the West for years was done by the family in these 40 days'.

Nicole Ward Jouve's story of a French woman coming to live in the cold damp English countryside and her growing disenchantment is funny and telling. Her heroine, Jocelyne (no English person can pronounce her name) battles with a Rayburn and nature-hating farmers, 'trees are nothing but a damn nuisance!' Her French visitors Jacques and Sophie keep their fur hats on in bed. Jacques rails against the paucity of the English hearth. 'That's why they stood up against Hitler, after their minuscule fires they couldn't have cared less about the bombs.' Colm Tóibín's piece, 'Fecking Off To England', is a delight; short but not fecking sweet.

There are one or two duds in this book, but, my dears, I'm far, far too English and polite to tell you what they are, in print. But come round to my house... there may be something nasty in the spare bedroom (see Jill Neville's 'Common Decency'), but we won't let that spoil our fun, will we?●

**Mica Nava** on the pleasures of being seventeen

# Teeny Bopping

Angela McRobbie's new book **Feminism And Youth Culture: From Jackie To Just Seventeen** (*Macmillan, hbk £35, pbk £9.99*) has an extraordinarily striking and apt cover. Based on a painting by an early-80s Berlin Realist, it depicts enigmatically two adolescent girls standing arm in arm, geared out with shades and boogie box and dressed in clothes which accentuate their stockily sensual bodies. Simultaneously bold and innocent, neither abject nor objects of our gaze, they are self-absorbed and self-contained: available to each other. This is a femininity we are not accustomed to seeing.

And this is the contribution of Angela McRobbies's book. Several of the articles in this important collection produced over the last ten years and gathered together in this volume for the first time, focus particularly on *ordinary* femininity. The heroines here are not the rebels who step out of line to protest against their condition, but the conformers, those who are preoccupied with romance, pop icons and their appearances; those who read girls' magazines like *Jackie* and *Just Seventeen* and want to be dancers; those who cope, while only teenagers themselves, with being single mothers.

Through her seminal textual analysis and careful ethnography, Angela McRobbie has, over the years, claimed these disparaged teenyboppers and their pleasures and preoccupations for the serious attention of feminists and cultural theorists. She has insisted that we look as discerningly and sympathetically at their world as at the more spectacular street cult-



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ures of their brothers and more militant sisters, and recognize (as the painting on the cover of the book does) the complexity and subtlety of feminine strategies of survival.

However, this book does more than foreground girls' experience and the culture of femininity. It also makes a number of more general theoretical interventions. In this category is the reprint of 'Settling Accounts With Subcultures', the classic feminist critique of the early youth studies of Dick Hebdige and Paul Willis, which also insists innovatively on drawing attention to the relationship between the personal history of an author and his or her theoretical work. Also in this category, but published for the first time in this volume, is the article '*Jackie* And *Just Seventeen*' which not only records changes in the content of girls' magazines over the 80s (since McRobbie's original analysis of the late 70s, also included here) but registers theoretical developments as well through its attention to the ways in which girls as readers both construct their own meanings and interact with the texts.

'Dance Narratives And Fantasies Of Achievement', a reworking of an earlier essay, is another important piece which explores how popular ballet books and cinematic narratives like *Fame* offer girls the possibility of imagining themselves fully engaged in their work, independent of their families and effectively 'taking destiny into their own hands'. There has been no other attempt that I know of to theorise dance and its particular appeal for girls. This will therefore rank as another influential piece of investigation alongside the work on teenage magazines.

Always an elegant and lucid writer, Angela McRobbie is at her best doing cultural analysis. What we see here is some of the work which backs up her important argument (published elsewhere) that the popular and fragmented nature of postmodern culture yields itself to a more positive interpretation than most of the pessimistic (and male) theorists of postmodernism would have us believe.●

**Paul Rogers** traces a dictator's rise to power

# Saddam Busters

All books written in rapid response to events run the risk of superficiality and poor organisation. **Saddam's War**, by John Bulloch and Harvey Morris (*Faber and Faber, hbk £13.99*), avoids the first, runs slap into the second, yet still has much to offer. Written as a journalistic offering without benefit of references or even a bibliography, it still manages to inform the reader on many of the internal features of Saddam Hussein's rise to power, though it has an infuriating tendency to dart back and forth over the past 30 years, too much like a 1960s film trying to be clever.

*Saddam's War* takes us up as far as the back-end of last year, but the core of the book is concerned with Saddam's rise to power and his success in surviving the Iran-Iraq War and turning Iraq into the most heavily armed state in the Arab world. It is well-informed on those early years and also gives a perceptive analysis of the various Arab reactions to the invasion of Kuwait.

As a rounded account of the rise of Saddam it has one serious failing in that it pays far too little attention to the economic and social development of Iraq over the past 20 years. The development of a health service, an education system and a formidable economic infrastructure were as much a feature of Ba'ath rule as the ruthless and consistent suppression of opposition, and they help explain the continued support for Saddam from much of the population of Iraq.

Although *Saddam's War* is essentially about his rise to power, it does also consider the nature of the US response to the crisis last August. In doing so, it does point out the importance of the Gulf oil reserves, yet it strangely fails to relate this to the massive forces available to Bush through the presence of US central command in the Middle East.

One of the key determinants of US policy towards Iraq last August was that it believed it had the military forces sufficient to evict Iraq from Kuwait. Without that perception, the US would have taken the sanctions route alone, and the outcome of the crisis would have been very different.

*Saddam's War* gives some idea of the ruthlessness of the man, but also points to his central aims of survival and aggrandisement, the latter based on long-range planning which went largely unrecognised by the US military. Within Iraq, all too many of his political opponents managed to underestimate his capabilities, and for most of them it was fatal.

At the international level, the US went into the crisis thinking that it was dealing with a second-division military power led by an incompetent petty dictator. Within a month of the start of the war it was beginning to appreciate its mistake, but the consequences will be with us for a long time to come.●



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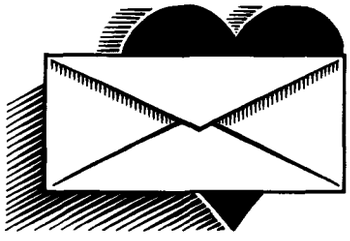

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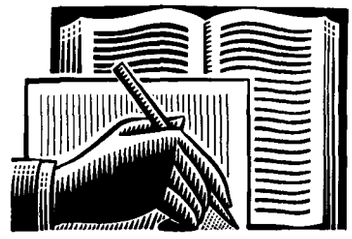

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● **Birth – Robin Gareth Munby** 7lbs 3oz. Parents Katy Gardner and Steve Munby all well.

**In Memoriam**

Lesser (nee Powell) Margaret SRN; Dama de la Orden de Lealtad de la Republica Espanola. Beloved wife and valiant comrade-in-arms of Sam Russell (Lesser). Remembered with affection, admiration and anguish at your absence from us — Sam, Ruth, Mike, Marika and Sean.



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## MT EVENTS

● **Leicester. New times, new sign posts.** I need an MT Readers Group to show the way. If you do too ring Adrian Hastings, 0533 703511.

● **Sexuality Event: A major day event to** be held in North London on Saturday July 13th. Sessions on ethics, power, censorship, cultural activism, the law and much more. For details contact North London MT Forum, c/o 28 Wargrave Avenue, London N15 6UD.

● **Haringey MT Group: Meets monthly,** and has recently initiated a seminar series discussing new times. For details of activities contact Mark on (081) 809 5068.

● **Borderlines Conference:** A conference on theory and politics at Sussex University, Saturday March 2nd. Speakers include Chantal Mouffe, Slavoj Zizek, Gayatri Spivak, Ernesto Laclau, Stuart Hall, Jacques Derrida and many more. Details from (0273) 698274.


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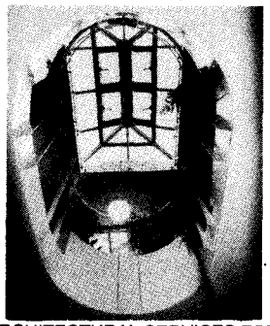

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## OUT OF THE BLUE

**April 27th 1991** Re-scheduled from February 9th due to weather

A conference looking beyond Thatcherism at the issues of Political *Democracy the Environment, Economic Policy, the New World Order,* Sexuality, Gender and Oppression and Cultural Politics. Contributors will include Stuart Hall, Charlie Leadbeater, Hilary Wainright, Ros Brunt, Martin Jacques, Jon Bloomfield and Sarah Benton.

Presented by Marxism Today in association with the Leeds University Dept. of External Studies.

**Tickets £7/5 (Unwaged)**
**For further details contact Bill Innes, CPGB, Leeds TUC Club, Saville Mount, Leeds LS7 3HZ.**
**0532 626 943.**

## ROOTS OF THE GULF WAR
## PROSPECTS FOR PEACE

**A conference organised by Media Workers Against the War and Lawyers Against the War**

**SATURDAY 9 MARCH 1991**

**9.30-5pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1**

**Speakers include:-**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Richard Falk** | Professor of International Law, Princetown University |
| **Prof Michael Gilsenan** | Magdalen College, Oxford |
| **Alain Gresh** | *Le Monde Diplomatique* |
| **Dr Fadia Faqia** | Jordanian novelist, University of Exeter |
| **Abbas Chiblak** | Palestinian writer |

Chairs: **Victoria Brittain, Alan Fountain and Geoffrey Bindman**

***The conference will concentrate on the following questions:***

Why is the USA in the Middle East? Why did Iraq invade Kuwait? What role has the United Nations played? Why do some Arab governments support US intervention? Why do most Arab people oppose US intervention? What are the demands of the Iraqi opposition? How is the War linked to the Palestinian question? What are the costs of this war and who pays? What kind of peace settlement will be reached?

**Cost:**£2.00, Students £1.00, UB40s and OAPs free.
**Transport: Holborn tube, 7, 8, 19, 25, 38, 171 buses.**

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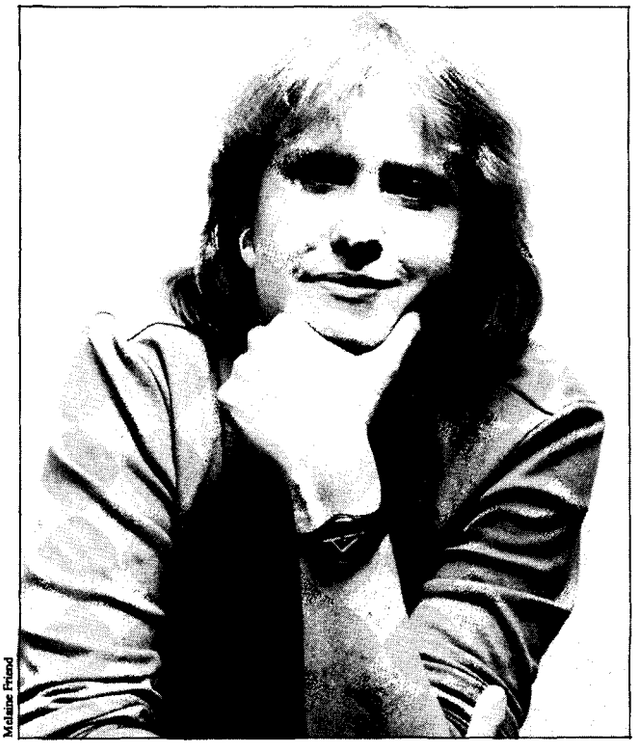
# Marjorie Thompson


Melanie Friend

Marjorie Thompson was born in St Louis, Missouri in 1957 and grew up in California in a politically active Republican family. In 1979 she came to Britain and completed her masters at the London School of Economics. She first became involved with CND in 1983 and was elected to its chair last year. Throughout the Gulf war, Thompson has advocated a peaceful solution through sanctions, negotiations and the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait.

**What newspapers do you take?** *The Guardian, The Independent, The Sunday Telegraph, The Independent On Sunday, The Sunday Times, The Observer, The Spectator,* and *The Nation.*

**What foreign languages do you speak?** Passable Spanish, a little Welsh.

**What is your favourite tv programme?** I hardly ever watch tv! *Baywatch, Beverley Hills 90210;* they remind me of what I left behind.

**When do you listen to music?** When I am angry, nervous, happy, sad or need to get psyched-up: Elton John, The Beach Boys, Sinatra, Dvorak, Crosby Stills & Nash.

**When was the last time you prayed?** Last night.

**What was your first thought this morning?** How can I get through everything that has to be done?

**What is the most common colour in your wardrobe?** Black, brown and navy blue – to look conservative.

**Which is your favourite piece of architecture?** The Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC. An elegant, understated reminder of the tragedy of humanity.

**What makes you feel secure?** A horrible orange blanket in my front room; drinking bourbon with my great-aunt Mary in St Louis.

**How regularly do you consult your horoscope?** About twice a month, but only in retrospect.

**When did you last visit your parents?** Christmas. I talk to them once a month normally, but more frequently since the war began.

**What is your greatest regret?** The outbreak of the Gulf war.

**You're driving through a hot, desolate expanse. What's playing on the stereo?** I've driven from California to Colorado – this is not an imaginary answer. *Take It Easy* – The Eagles, *I Am Constant* – The Climax Blues Band, and anything by Journey.

**Which is your city of the nineties?** Prague – I've always wanted to go there.

**How has your diet changed in the past ten years?** Less fat, no beef, more fruit.

**What physical exercise do you do?** Swimming, aerobics, ice-skating, but very little of anything else these days.

**Under what circumstances would you use private medicine?** If I were diagnosed as having an incurable disease I would go home and be looked after by my dad, who's a doctor.

**At what age do you want to stop working?** 80 (politically), 55 (paid job).

**Do you really need your car?** I don't have one!

**What is your favourite advertisement?** I like the billboards illustrated by women with spray paint against sexism.

**Who do you respect, and why?** Denis Healey for his wit and style, Oriana Fallacci for her courage and writing, and Vaclav Havel for living in truth.

**What would you die for?** My partner, my family, and in a *just war*, my country.

**What current campaign do you most support?** Apart from CND – Amnesty, Chile Solidarity and War On Want.

**What do you now own that you had never dreamt of owning?** I can't answer this question, because I was never without anything I needed – I have, however, done things I never dreamed of doing, like having a tv in my bedroom when the war broke out.

**What is the most amount of money you've spent on an item of clothing?** £85 on an Arabella Pollen dress. I bought it when I got my job with CND.

**What hi-tech device scares you?** Anything above an electronic typewriter.

**How much time do you spend each day on the phone?** Far *too* much.

**Under what circumstances would you support censorship?** Pornographic material which is degrading to women, children *and* the men who look at it.

**Are you better off paying your poll tax?** I *would* be slightly better off *if* I had paid it.

**What has been the most significant event in your life?** I'm not sure that I want to share that with a family magazine!

**What makes you feel guilty?** Being so disorganised that I don't have time when friends need me.

**Complete this sentence: If I were dictator for a day...** I would call for a ceasefire and a Middle East peace conference on the Gulf. I'd also begin a worldwide arms conversion programme, and rehabilitate those involved in the arms trade. All men would receive instruction in women's rights as well!

**How much more do you want to achieve?** Personally, to make more time for things that count. Professionally, this is as far as I'd ever imagined going.

**How has the war in the Gulf left you feeling?** Angry, but determined.●



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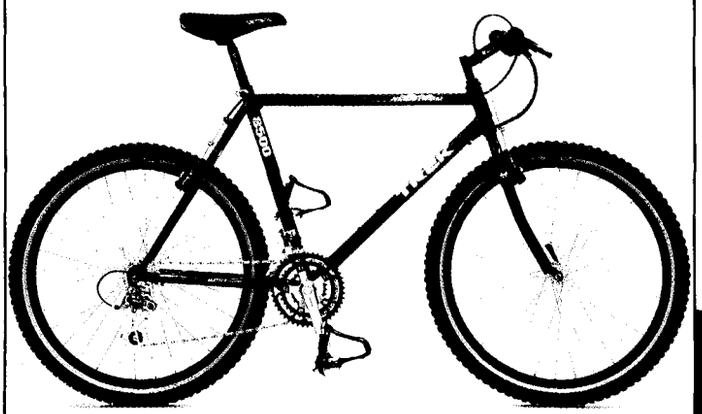
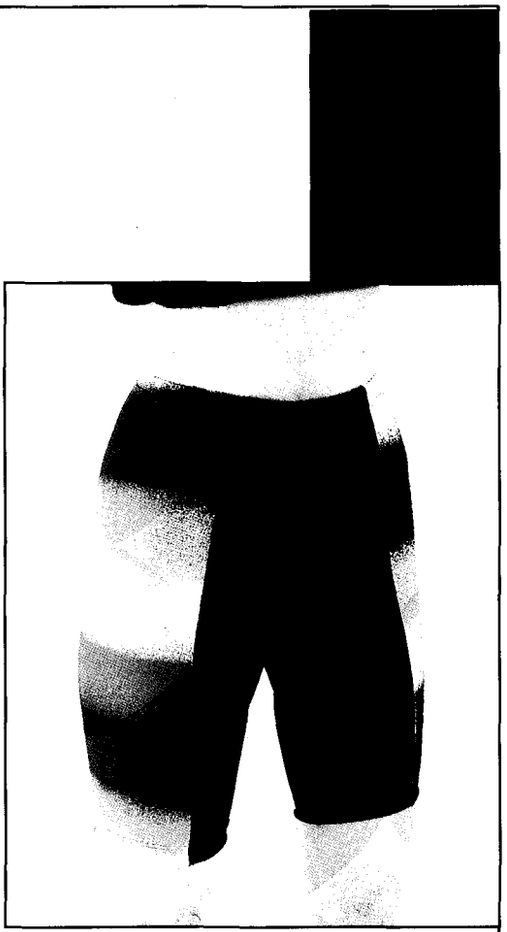
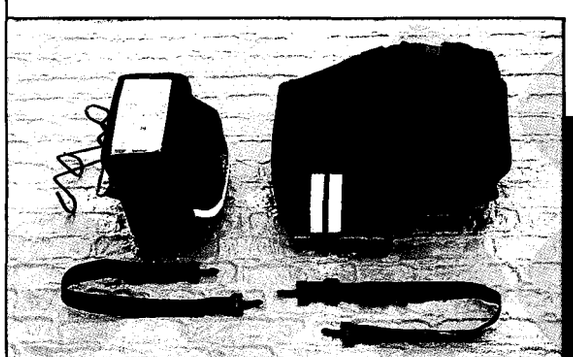




# The New Mosquito

## 'Bike & Bits' Catalogue

## OUT NOW!



mosquito

123 Essex Road, Islington
London N1 2SN. 071-226 8841

Please send me a copy of the Mosquito 'Bike & Bits' Catalogue

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Phone No. .....

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## "WE ARE AN INTERNATIONAL MULTI-CULTURAL TEAM WORKING FOR PEACE AND OPPOSING ANY FORM OF AGGRESSION, PAST, PRESENT, OR FUTURE BY ANY PARTY IN THE GULF."

The GULF PEACE TEAM maintained a non-violent presence in the war zone on the Saudi/Iraqi border through the opening phase of the Coalition Offensive in the face of extreme uncertainty and danger. However, on 27th January the Camp was compulsorily evacuated by the Iraqi officials.

We have established a fine, independent reputation in the region and will continue to express a world wide desire for peace through two new International Camps to be sited on significant border locations.

In addition the GULF PEACE TEAM will be working with two international relief agencies to ensure proper distribution of medical aid and special foodstuffs to civilian victims of war.

In order to implement this progress we urgently need more funding, and as we are entirely dependent on private donations ask you, please to send whatever you can.

GULF PEACE TEAM

فريق السلام الخليجي


**7 Cazanove Road, London N16 6BR.**
**Tel 081-442 4661**


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I want to help the Gulf Peace Team. I enclose a donation of:

£100 ☐ £50 ☐ £25 ☐ £10 ☐ Other £ _____

(Cheques/Postal orders to *Gulf Peace Team* or directly into any NatWest Branch A/C No 01412264 Sort Code 56 00 29)

Name (MR/MRS/MS/MISS) _____

Address _____

_____

_____

_____ Postcode _____

TICK BOX. Would you like to . . .

☐ Set up a local solidarity peace camp?

☐ Take part in our 'fax' campaign?

☐ Join our international 'Walk for peace' to the war zone?

☐ Buy 'Gulf Peace Team' T-shirts, Sweat shirts or Badges. (List available on request.)

☐ Please send me a pack of 100 leaflets at £4.00.

Signature _____ Telephone _____

Return slip to:
Gulf Peace Team, FREEPOST, London N16 6BR, England.


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